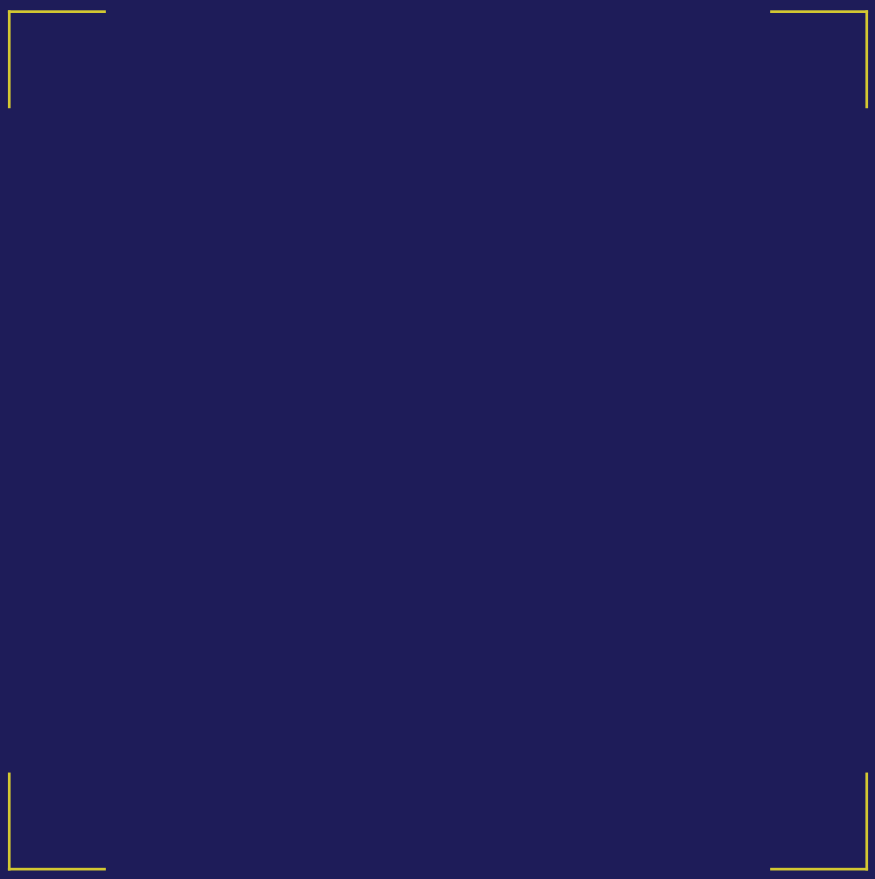
COMMONS RE-PLACED



UTOPIAN ACTION BETWEEN DRAWING AND BUILDING

COMMONS RE-PLACED

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ABSTRACT

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How can architects transform a place without making a building?

Digging through and building upon a rich history of architectural utopianism, this study reopens questions and concerns from different avant-garde groups in Europe and the Americas, all of whom sought alternative ways of living. While many of these groups would draw entire new cities, megastructures, or hi-tech nomadic pods, some groups favored more active forms of representing their visions, including public performance, erecting temporary structures, or creating localized urban interventions. These latter activities, however, have typically belonged to the domain of art, its criticism and history, but I argue that such activities are intimately tied to architectural concerns and should not be ignored from within 'our' discipline.

How then does architectural representation become a form of architectural action? This question is addressed in a series of experiments that attempt to reimagine an urban site in Austin, Texas, in such a way that offers new perspectives and suggest alternative atmospheres along public streets. By conflating the act of drawing and the act of building, the study hopes to expand both the social role of architects and the tools of representation at their disposal.

This book is dedicated to

Zoë

Maíra

Sayen

and Leo

Winter break following the fall 2012 semester was the first opportunity I had to catch my breath after transferring to the UT School of Architecture. I stopped inside the bookstore I frequent whenever I am back home in the city. It was here that I had bought *Fragments of an Anarchist Anthropology* by David Graeber over a year earlier before moving to Austin. This time, it was a small green book in the architecture section: *50 Years of Recuperation of the Situationist International* by McKenzie Wark. Looking back, these books stand out, foreshadowing a path that my curiousities would take during my studies here at UT. Along the way, I was lucky to work under several particularly stimulating professors: Martin Kevorkian, Benjamin Gregg, Nichole Wiedemann, Igor Siddiqui, and Fernando Lara, to whom I am especially grateful for having reopened a deeper engagement with the Latin American context. I would like to thank Murray Legge, Ariel Padilla Grimaldo, and Rodrigo Messina for being illuminated interlocutors. I am also indebted to Patricio Villa, Hannah Frossard, Eric Mattson, Joshua Heaps, and Ursula Barker, without whose help I would not have been able to complete this work. Lastly, I would like to thank my mother and my father.

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Austin, 2016

Commons Re-Placed is a project about real city streets and fictional events. It is both grounded in history and forward looking. It exists in the world and in the computer, on paper and in the momentary glimpses of passers-by.

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Utopia

uo “not”

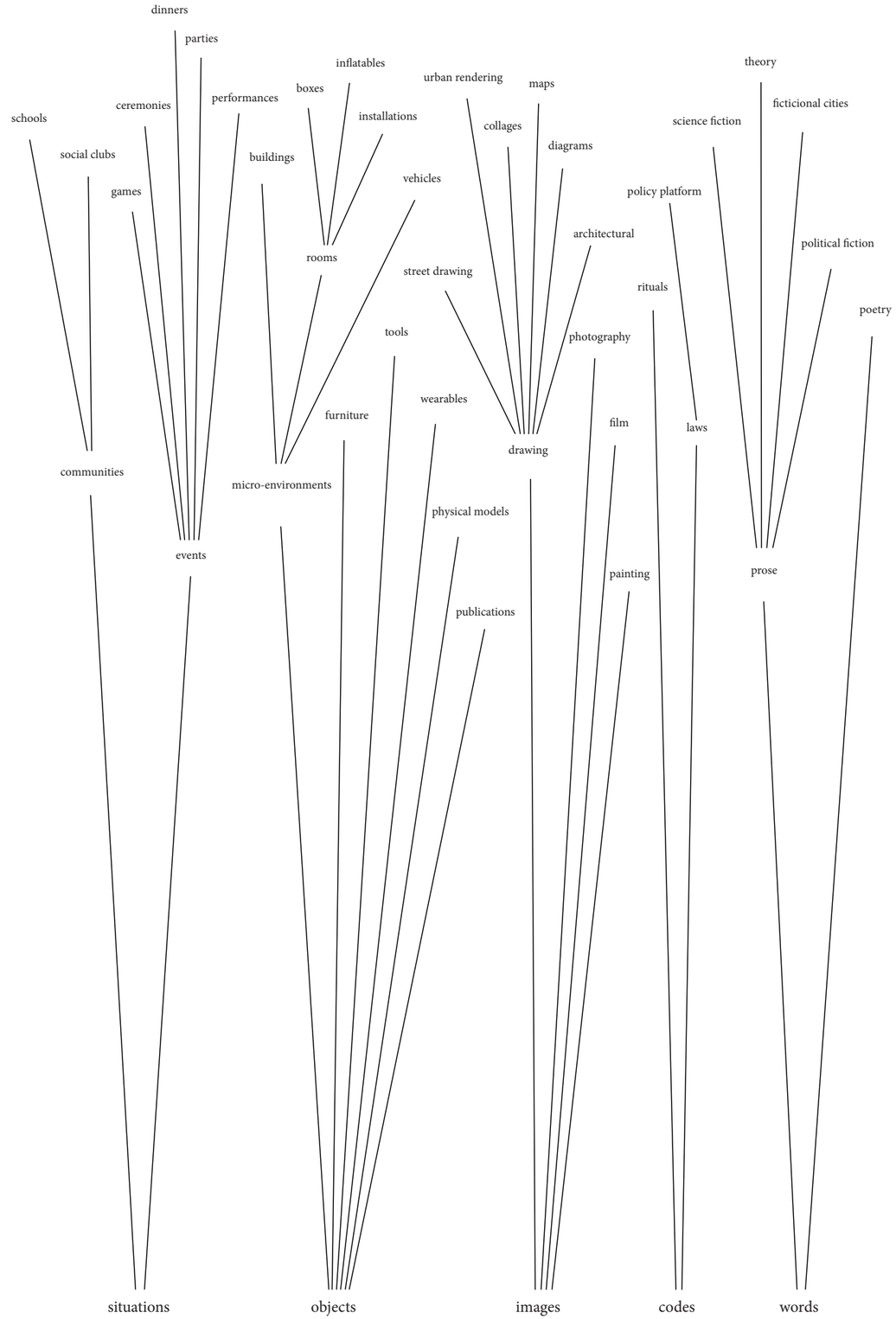
topos “place”

Undefining Utopianism

Utopianism belongs to any field that is capable of building worlds. While architecture is an obvious candidate for this task, literature, art, politics, and sciences are also involved in speculating possible realities and as such, each operates under different senses of the word.

In the field of architecture, and within its most standard historiography, the term ‘utopia’ sticks most comfortably to two historical periods: roughly 1910s-1920s and the 1950s-1970s. The first includes the birth of avant-garde groups, of which the Italian Futurists and Russian Constructivists were particularly engaged with architecture and urbanism (rather than Dada or the Vorticists who focused more on producing art works and poety). This period famously saw German Werkbund’s formation and creation of the Bauhaus school. It was witness to Le Corbusier’s rise to prominence and the ensuing CIAM dialogues about ideal urban planning. The second period, characterized by post-war technologies and revolutionary struggles around the world regarding labor and political ideology, sees utopian architectures coming from groups like Archigram, the Japanese Metabolists, and Italian practices like Archizoom, Superstudio or Aldo Rossi. A third period would be the 1880s-1890s, in England, where utopian literature rose to a peak (led by Edward Bellamy and H.G. Wells), but which also saw manifestations in architecture and planning in the work of William Morris or Ebenezer Howard. Each period, each with its own entangled bundle of historical causes, were times of self-reflective reevaluation, where dreams of how things could be otherwise filled many minds of the day.

The architects just mentioned are often the first that architecture students will recall when listing off utopian practices. The utopian designs in this standard historiography earned their places by being proposals that depicted either a radically different physical reconfiguration, or social reconfiguration of the city, or often both, some times to extreme, even absurdist

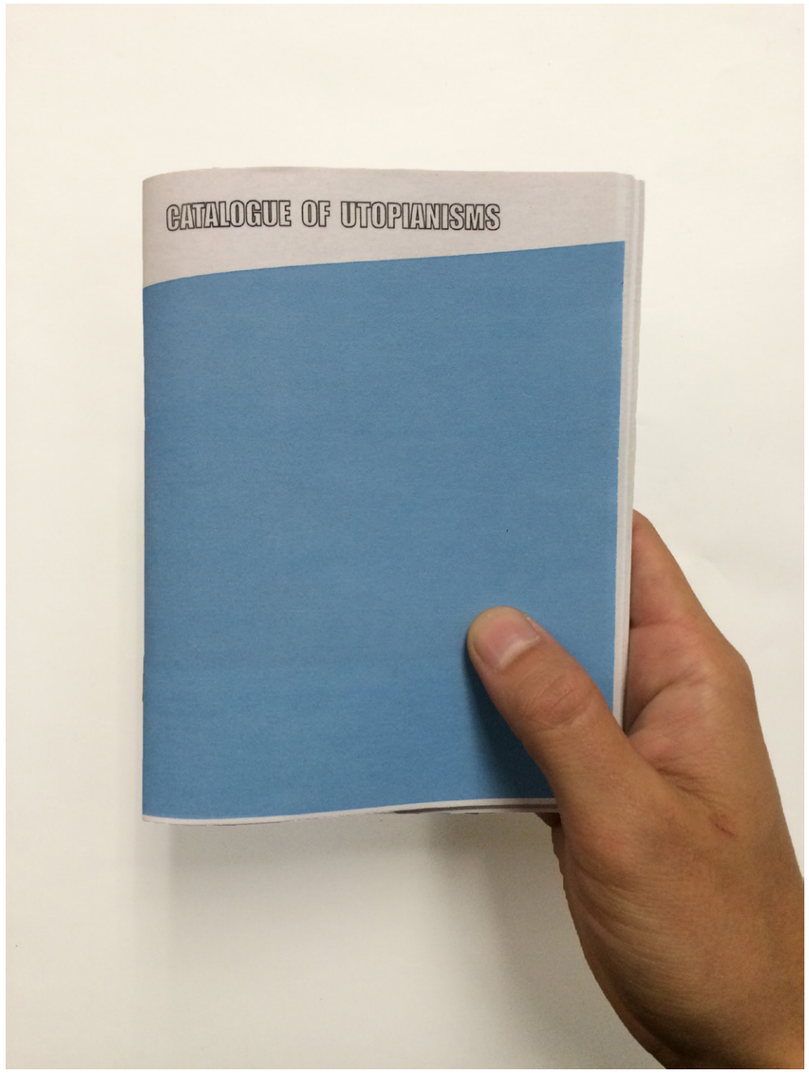


ends. Their legacy has been cemented by writers such as Bahnham, Tafuri, and others, who have cited them as examples in key theoretical writings[1]. In providing such a reconfiguration of the world, each utopian design adopts some new governing organization, accompanied by novel form-languages, suggesting how the world ought to be instead. This question of how the world ought to be, whether answered facetiously or earnestly, is at the heart of utopian architecture.

Projects that are utopian are ones that suggest a different way that the world could be organized. Different social relations, different daily routines, or different surrounding environment. To be more strictly etymological, utopia (Greek: ou "not" + topos "place") suggests the paradoxical chase for a placeless place that will never be. Often utopia has been understood as the locus of a perfect society: an ideal city whose realization we may strive towards but one that can never be truly reached. This common understanding of the word as the perfect place skips too fast over an important neutrality that the etymological definition of utopia offers us. It does not necessarily ask the question: what is good? But instead asks us: What is different? What is new? What does not exist here? Leading then to: What else could exist here?

Utopia, especially as it belongs to literature, is usually understood as an ideal place for a perfect, yet impossible, society. The term itself was coined by Thomas More in his 1516 book of the same title that describes a fictional island society in the Atlantic Ocean, and since his usage the term has come to be associated with a, not only different, but better world. This conflation between the not-place and the good-place is pervasive yet understandable, especially considering that the Greek prefix eu "well, pleasant, good" leaves us with the homonymous word, Eutopia. Eutopia, and later Dystopia (Greek: dus "hard, difficult, bad") are modified versions of the valueless Utopia. Because the word is begins as ethically neutral, neither good nor bad, there is a tendency to fill the vacuum of ought in some way or another. How *ought* the world to be, if not this? Therefore, utopianism, more than being about producing the good or the bad, is about producing the different, or the alien.

To be fair, the relationship between the Eutopia and Utopia is necessarily an entangled one. After all, those who imagine different worlds are often moved to do so by critical observations of the current one. To negate the current state of affairs by imagining and representing the

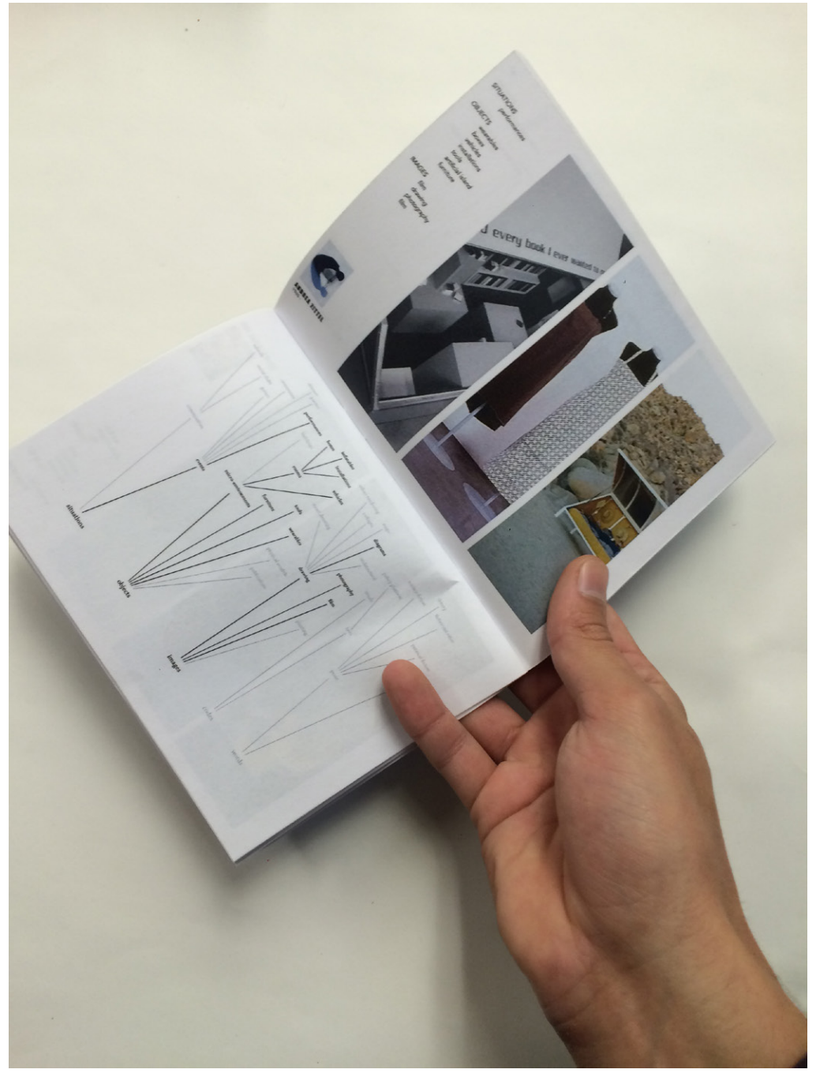


not-place, is a political act. The *ought* is unavoidable in a constructing a utopia. Typically, critics of utopianism cite the historical instances of human horror, when a state power imposed absolute force in pursuit of an ideal society. “Stalinists, Maoists, and other idealists tried to carve society into impossible shapes, killing millions in the process”, but as David Graeber argues, these views betray a fundamental misconception: “that imagining better worlds was itself the problem”[2]. The problem is not in the act imagining different ways the world could be, but the ways in which that vision is implemented, represented, or demonstrated.

The type utopian action, then, that I will advocate for is action directed towards producing glimpses of a different world “in the shell of the old.” In other words, the production of new situations in existing places. The verb ‘demonstrate’ seems to be most appropriate. In order to show that another world is possible we must provide an example. The demonstration is an object or action that serves as a tool to communicate a broader idea to others.

How then does the field of architecture demonstrate utopias? Utopianism, as an act of speculation into an unknown future, is already built into the act of design. Architects produce designs, in the form of drawings and images, which with luck can eventually lead to a realized building. For an architectural project to be utopian, however, it must propose something different from the usual state of affairs. For this reason we cannot call all architecture utopian. In fact, most architecture is not. The utopian projects are ones that gradually push the boundary of normalcy by being consistently just outside of it. These projects, in turn, are the ones that produce changes in social life, either immediately or eventually.

“It is this showing of everyday life transformed that characterizes a utopia, and utopianism is about just that transformation of everyday life.”[3]



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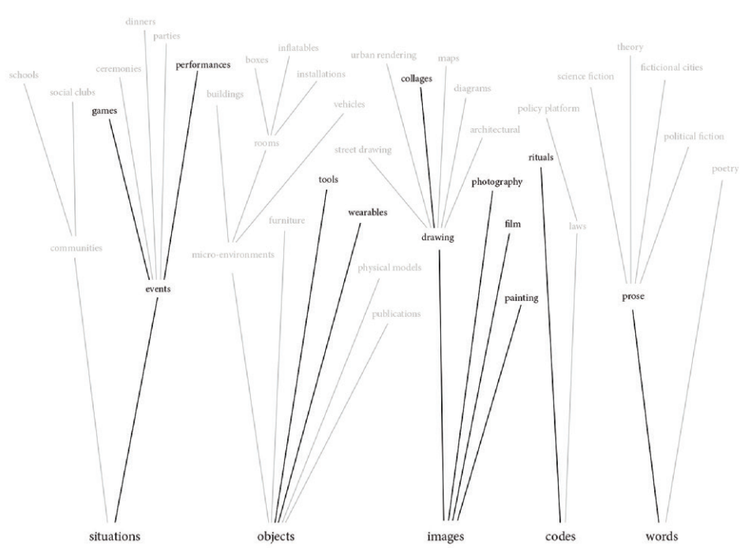
SITUATIONS
games
performances

OBJECTS
wearables
tools
sculpture

IMAGES
film
drawing
painting

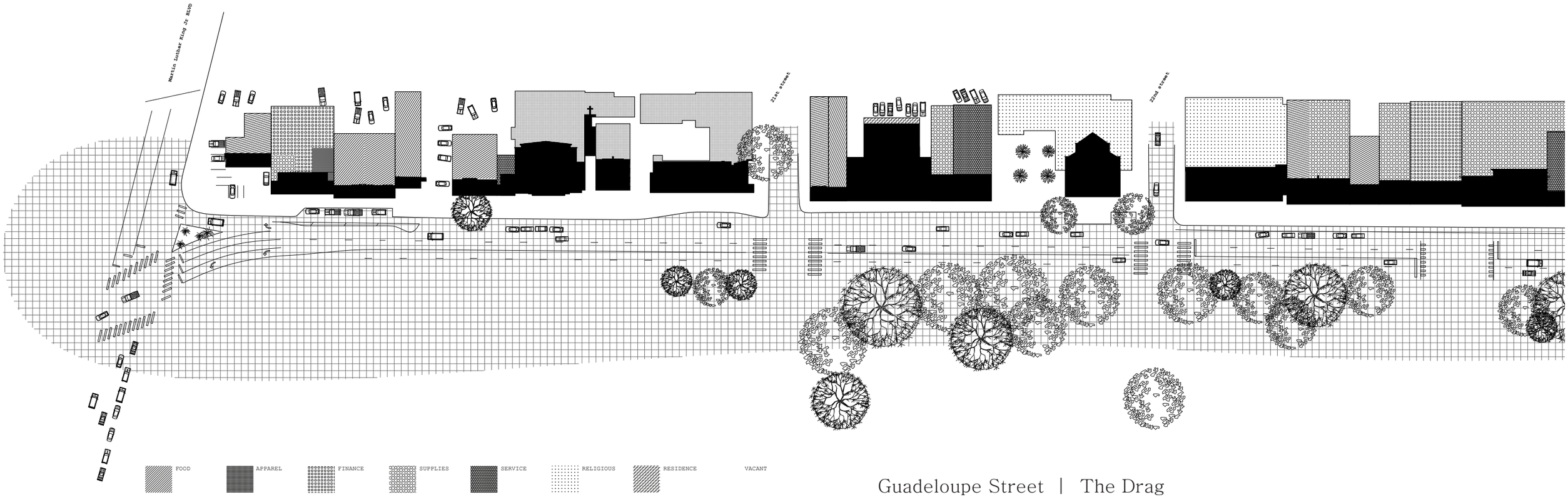
WORDS
correspondence

LYGIA CLARK
1920-1988



sample spread from the Catalogue of Utopianisms

The Place: The Drag

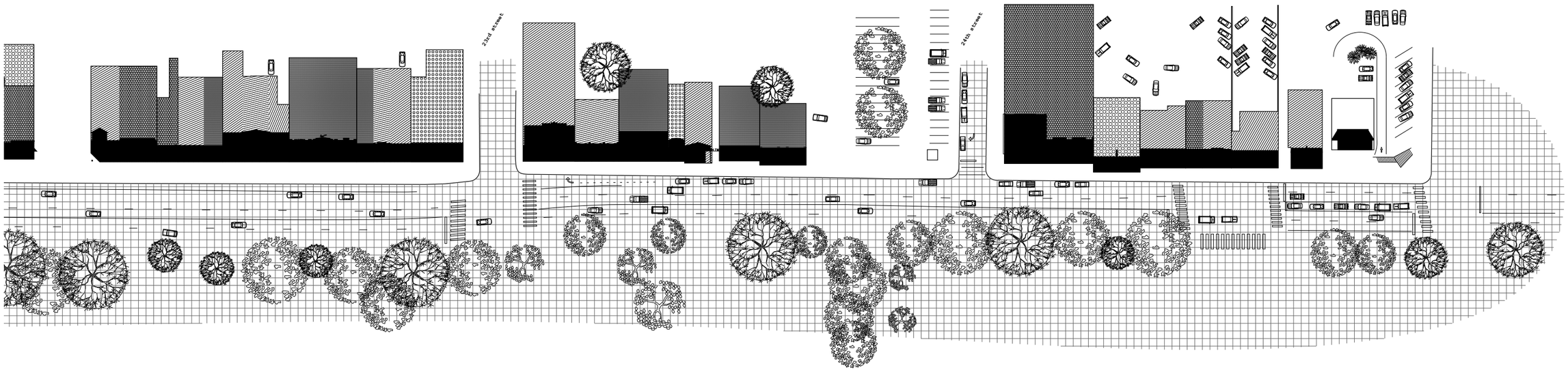


Jorge Luis Borges, master of labyrinths, undertook a teaching residency at the University of Texas at Austin during the fall 1961 semester. All accounts seem to agree that he enjoyed his brief time in Austin. He would spend spare hours at the Night Hawk diner [1905 Guadeloupe St], a legendary venue of smoky intellectual discourse, where university students and professors would regularly convene. (Janis Joplin would only begin to frequent the Night Hawk the following year.)

Guadeloupe Street | The Drag

The site of experimentation was Guadeloupe street, or “the Drag” as we know it. Why is the Drag an appropriate place to test the utopian possibilities of drawing? The Drag is the daily background noise experienced by almost anyone associated with the University. It is chaotic and messy, yet brimming with corporate presence and increasing land values. It is a place where the Nike company makes advertisements in sidewalk chalk to complement the billboards. The Drag barely manages to retain some wafts of its stranger past, seen in the subtle performances of pan-handelers or otherwise odd characters that stroll along, mumbling to themselves.

It is both an intensely active, yet generally unpleasant urban commons. The street, unlike paper or the computer screen, is not a neutral surface. Especially on the Drag, it is collectively negotiated one



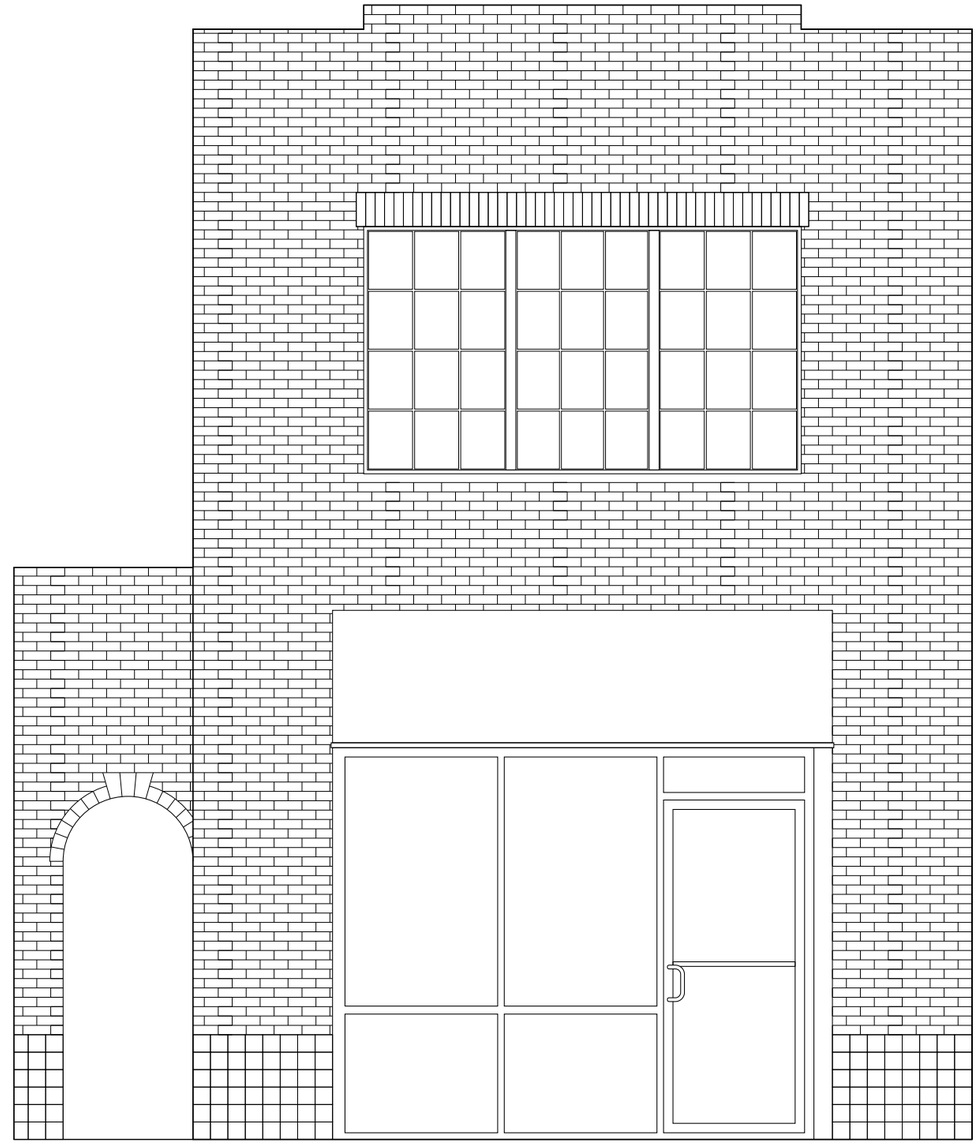
Between 1966 and 1977, one of the earliest underground countercultural newspapers, *The Rag*, was published and distributed in Austin. It covered cultural and political topics ignored by the press at the time, including sexual revolution, gay liberation, and drug culture. The image shows George and Mariann selling issues in 1966.

Slacker (1991), the second film of the Austin-based Richard Linklater, depicts the Drag in its prior state of 'weirdness'

Flip Flop Shops
West Campus Living
Hampton Inn
AT&T
Jamba Juice
Guadalupe / Austin
Guadalupe St
Google
23rd Street
Artist's Market
W 23rd St
Kaplan

Between Drawing and Building

"1-Up Repairs", 2004 Guadeloupe Street, Elevation (not to scale)



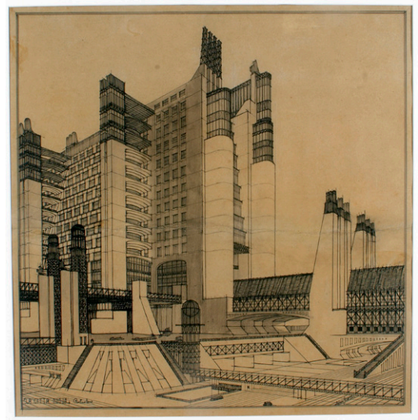
Between Drawing and Building

Architects do not produce buildings—they produce designs. Designs exist primarily as drawings. Drawing has been, and remains, the preeminent tool, medium, and direct final product of the architect. Architects are translators, above all else, who are continuously tasked with transforming social ideas into material forms. As my first studio professor once mentioned, “an idea does not exist until it is drawn”. Even if it is used every year, the quote stuck with me. The questions that consume architectural thinking exist in this interstice between idea and reality; the interactive threshold they share is the architectural drawing.

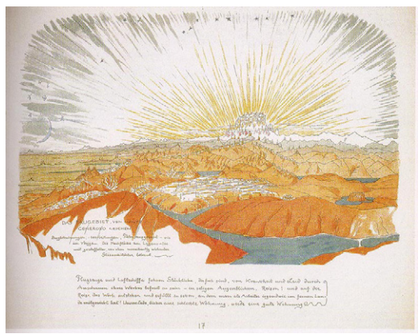
—

Traditionally, the drawing (“a unique work on paper” as defined by both the MoMA and The Drawing Center)[1] is concerned with using lines to indicate a separation. Lines bound areas, describe edges, align alignments, all for the purposes of the architectural drawing’s presumed end goal: the construction of a structure. However, drawings have evolved in architecture to fill two different roles. Typically, there are orthographic drawings: drawings whose lines are determined by quantified lengths and angles that preserve the congruency of geometry across paper to building. These drawings describe where objects and spaces begin and end. Axonometric and oblique drawings also operate from a logic that is true to the represented object itself. The perspective drawing, while still a linear composition, introduces distortion to match the eye or the lens. With perspective drawings, we start to slip into another purpose altogether.

As far as the drawing is representative of something larger, less flat, than itself, the subject of drawing has not always been a measured building. More than being a set of instructions for constructing a building, the architectural drawing can serve to tell a brief story or transmit an impression of occupation. It is a more literary way of expressing architecture, not unlike comic books or graphic novels (media which architects steal from more and more). Unlike Louis Kahn’s fridge-magnet quote that architecture must go from the ‘unmeasurable to the measurable’ before once again being unmeasurable, the kinds of drawings that depict an event or a desire evade any measured quantification altogether. We are left with two categories for architectural drawings to fall into: those that describe the geometry of a measurable object and those that convey the unmeasurable qualities of an atmosphere or situation. Today these two categories of architectural drawing continue to exist with clear distinction and equal utility. The audiences of each kind of drawing is directly evident, with builders and contractors on the one hand, and clients, professors, and inhabitants on the other. In both cases, however, the drawing is still a signifier for something beyond itself. In both cases it is a translation of a concept into a communicable form where the message exists beyond the flatness of the paper.



“La Citta Nuova”
Antonio Sant’Elia
1914



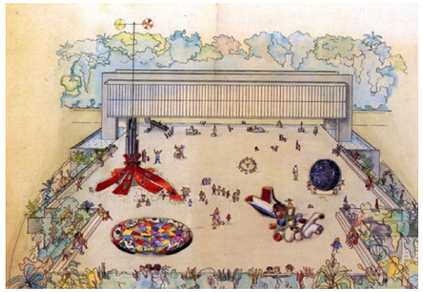
“Alpine Architecture”
Bruno Taut
1917

Despite being the central task of the profession, the drawing only goes so far in defining most architects. The true dreamers cannot avoid the temptation of complete design freedom afforded by the neutral paper surface and indulge in designing the unbuildable. (Unbuildable by either defying natural laws, dominant social orders, accepted conventions, or all three.) Those architects whose designs remain in the flat world are commonly termed, either deridingly or admiringly, "paper architects". Of the two kinds of drawings mentioned above, the paper architects produce more of the latter, where designs are represented in ways that convey a different kind of life altogether, serving the goal of demonstrating just how transformative their unbuildable design is.

The lonely intensity of la Citta Nuova (Antonio Sant'Elia), the buoyant radiation of Alpine Architecture (Bruno Taut), the desolate bacchanal of the Supersurface (Superstudio), are all conveyed through drawing (the examples are countless). Even for architects who were successful in materializing their building designs, this unmeasured drawing, or simply "rendering", is critically important in demonstrating the architect's intended reading of the design. I have in mind Lina Bo Bardi, and specifically the SESC Pompeia building and the MASP building. In each case, both the building itself and the drawings produced for it reinforce the playful sensibility that Bardi so wonderfully achieved. She is a rare case where paper and matter meet under utopian ambitions. Typically it is only 'paper architecture' that has been the associated activity for an *utopian* architect.[2] Especially when the putative subject of their designs entail entire cities, the scope of realizing design at such a vast scale is well beyond the limited power of an architect, let alone almost any individual. Hence the indirect contact with reality that the architect, for the most past, must endure.

Despite a high degree of disciplinary spill over, the artists have a clear advantage when it comes to producing work directly. As Robin Evans said, "what might have occurred in architecture, but did not, occurred outside of it."[3] It is more often the artists who are able to branch across different media, and who have direct access to producing situations, rather than merely representing them. According to Evans, if architects are to insist

"Supersuperficie"
Superstudio
1972



rendering of the MASP building,
Lina Bo Bardi
1958

interior of the SESC building,
Lina Bo Bardi
1984

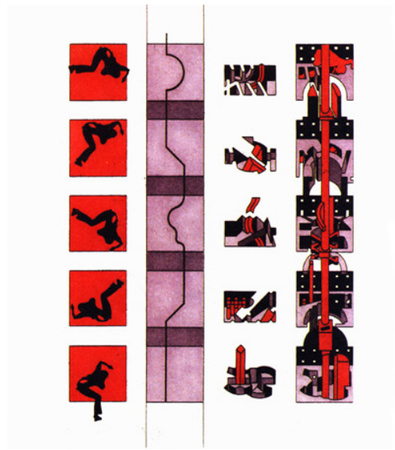
on direct access to the final work, they face a choice between "designating the drawing as the real repository of architectural art" or to "reject the drawing" completely. What Evans is saying is that though the architect has specific goals of transforming the world in some way, she has relinquished her power of intervention for the sake of preserving the drawing as the principal activity of her trade. Mark Wigley reminds us that the current conception of an architect that our society still uses (and which Robin Evans, in some ways, is bemoaning) was constructed in the fifteenth century, when Alberti and his colleagues argued that "the designer is a thinker rather than a worker, producing drawings rather than objects."[4] The architect's identity as thinker over maker would be challenged by some today, however such a definition of the architect's official scope of work remains very much intact.

What else can a drawing be? What else can a drawing do?

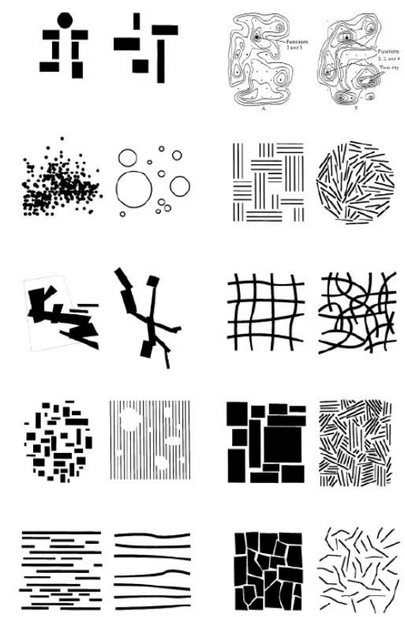
Maybe a way to step away from this deadlocked dichotomy between a representative drawing and a direct material object is to ask: Do all drawings represent something beyond them-

selves? Serious responses to this question only arose after Modernism died. In 1978 Bernard Tschumi has his first public showing of the *Manhattan Transcripts* at the Artists Space in New York. At some glances, the drawings from the Transcripts seem to make sense. Plans are plans, depth is depth, photographs are photographs. The rules of the game, however, begin to fold in on themselves, as the distinctions that Tschumi cleanly sets up between the different types of drawing begin to atrophy. As one follows the stories that Tschumi is notating, one notices a game of call-and-response. If the first clip was an axonometric, and the next is a photomontage, the third image will somehow be a merger of the two. The game he is playing is one that deliberately sidelines the conventional representational standards of architectural drawing, or "notation" as Tschumi prefers. By questioning the sign, Tschumi shows us a world "where people are walls, where walls dance the tango, and tangos run for office."[5] This is a different kind of architectural utopianism altogether. Tschumi is neither describing a measurable geometry or an unmeasured situation; what takes precedence is a playful distortion of the very rules of architectural drawing. A line shifts, and suddenly a facade is altered. The work is still paper architecture by definition, but with a new formulation of how drawing translates between the measurable and the unmeasurable, how architecture notation itself is actually malleable, offering more qualities than merely referencing something beyond itself.

Another architect-thinker who digs in similar directions is Stan Allen. Allen, however, is a master of distilling the most essential lines from what is not normally expressed in drawing. Forces in a landscape can be converted into a form of notation, and, in turn, these marks, with their own cohesive logic, can serve to organize a new project. The title of his early monograph, *Points + Lines*, itself shows Allen's deference to the two most primitive elements of architectural notation. In describing what he terms as "field conditions" Allen references the work of artist Barry Le Va, who would generate patterns from chance events such as a pile of ball bearings rolling freely on a flat surface or lines of baking flour that are blown across an empty room[6]. What an architect should be aware of, argues Allen, is how forms of notation have specific forces built into them and emanating from them,



Manhattan Transcripts, "The Fall"
Bernard Tschumi
1978



field condition diagrams,
Stan Allen
1985

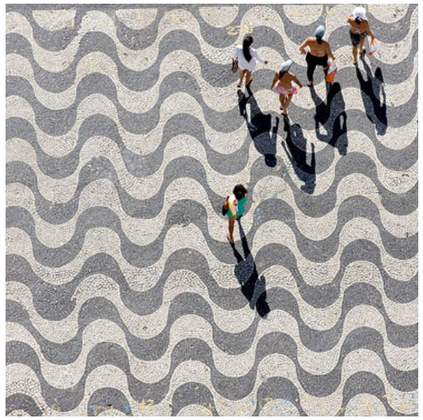
even before they reference anything else. When a drawing does not refer to anything, it no longer suits the needs of the architect and becomes almost nothing at all. So if it is no longer a drawing, what is it?

We can begin to inhabit the gap between the two extremes, of nothing and something, when we look at some examples. The furniture maker draws the chair at 1:1 scale (life-size). Here the drawing is still representative. It represents the furniture object projected onto a flat two-dimensional plane and it is helpful tool for imagining the construction of the actual object and in visually testing the proportions and arrangements of the parts. It is more real than paper architecture but still composed of markings on a flat surface.

What about a sidewalk paving pattern? An arrangement of stones that, while possessing mass and volume, is experienced primarily as a two-dimensional surface. Rio de Janeiro's Calçadão (literally, "the big sidewalk") has almost global recognition as a strongly identifiable, post-card worthy, urban surface. The Portuguese stones that make the black and white wave patterns are relatively small and

uniform, contributing to a noticeable physical texture, but the experience of walking on the calçadão is an overwhelmingly visual one. When you are there, you walking in a drawing. Equal parts black, equal parts white, the sidewalk patterns can lend themselves to countless symbolic interpretations, but it is not clear that Roberto Burle Marx had any reference in mind when designing them. In fact, most of Burle Marx's design rests on a fairly direct translation from the drawing (or painting) to the paving or planting. The paving does not fit into the the MoMA definition of drawing mentioned earlier, as it is not done on paper, though like in paper drawing, edges are defined and spaces are implied by a flat surface. When Evans evokes the way architects have used the drawing as a tool for authorship over the final result, he mentions the medieval phenomenon where architects had greater control over the design of facades to the degree that the facade was flatter and paper-like. His main example for this is the Campanile of S. Maria del Fiore, whose design, he claims, was stealthily controlled by the architect in how it was drawn. A similar phenomenon happens with Burle Marx but on the horizontal plane. His drawings are materialized into paving with almost perfect geometric congruency. Most floor plans have a cut plane about 4' above the floor they represent. While flat on the paper, the drawing carries crucial information in the Euclidean Z-axis (height). The Burle Marx plans however are only subtly altered in this axis, making his landscape plans quite similar to the flattened medieval elevations described by Evans. Stan Allen also wondered about the potential to make urban drawing that was horizontal. He prognosticates that the networks of activity and intensity in a city will not marked by "demarcating lines but by thickened surfaces"[7].

When we look at a drawing without reference and without scale, we have entered a liminal space that exists as a blind spot on Robin Evan's radar detection between architecture and art. A drawing—marks on a surface—can be experienced *directly*, provided it is large enough to have a relationship to the body of the observer. It is not "architecture" in the Albertian sense because it goes directly to an experience or situation. And while the production of situations has been the goal of both architects and artists alike, maybe it is through a looser definition of the drawing itself that architects can join artists in possessing *direct* access towards achieving their goals.



Calçadão of Copacabana Beach,
Rio de Janeiro
Roberto Burle Marx,
1970

Plan for "Cite' de
l'Architecture et du Patrimoine"
Paris, Roberto Burle Marx, 1954

Punto de Reunion, Mexico City:
designated places to convene in
case of emergencies

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1. Wigley, Mark. "Paper, Scissors, Blur" (11)

2. A group of recently graduated students in Moscow formed a collective in the 1980s and adopted the name "Paper Architects" and did just that. See www.utopia.ru

3. Evans, Robins. "Translations from Drawing to Building" 1986 (157)

4. Wigley, Mark. "Towards a History of Quantity" found in Architecture Between Spectacle and Use. Ed. Anthony Vidler. 2008 (156, 157)

5. Tschumi, Bernard. Manhattan Transcripts. 1981 (12)

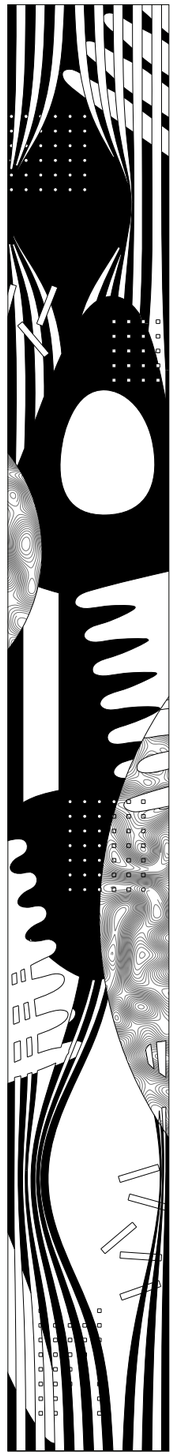
6. Allen, Stan. Points + Lines. 1999 (96)

7. Allen, Stan. Points + Lines. 1999 (58)

Tschumi shows us how architectural notation can have a loose fit with its supposed reference.

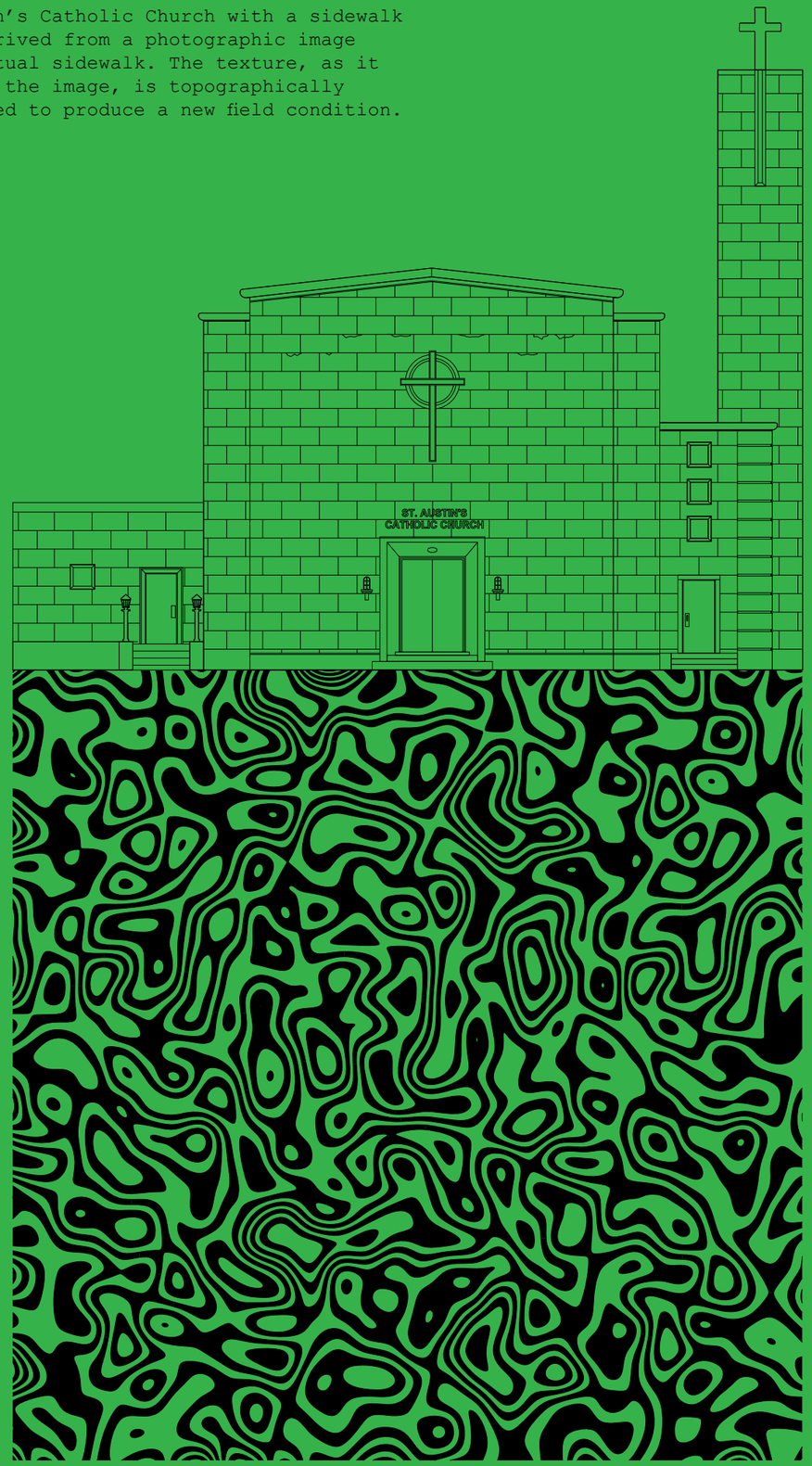
Allen shows us how a drawing in itself can create field conditions that suggest occupation, movement, and other forces.

Evans and Burle Marx show us how the two dimensional drawing can stealthily slip into material reality.



proposals for sections of sidewalk

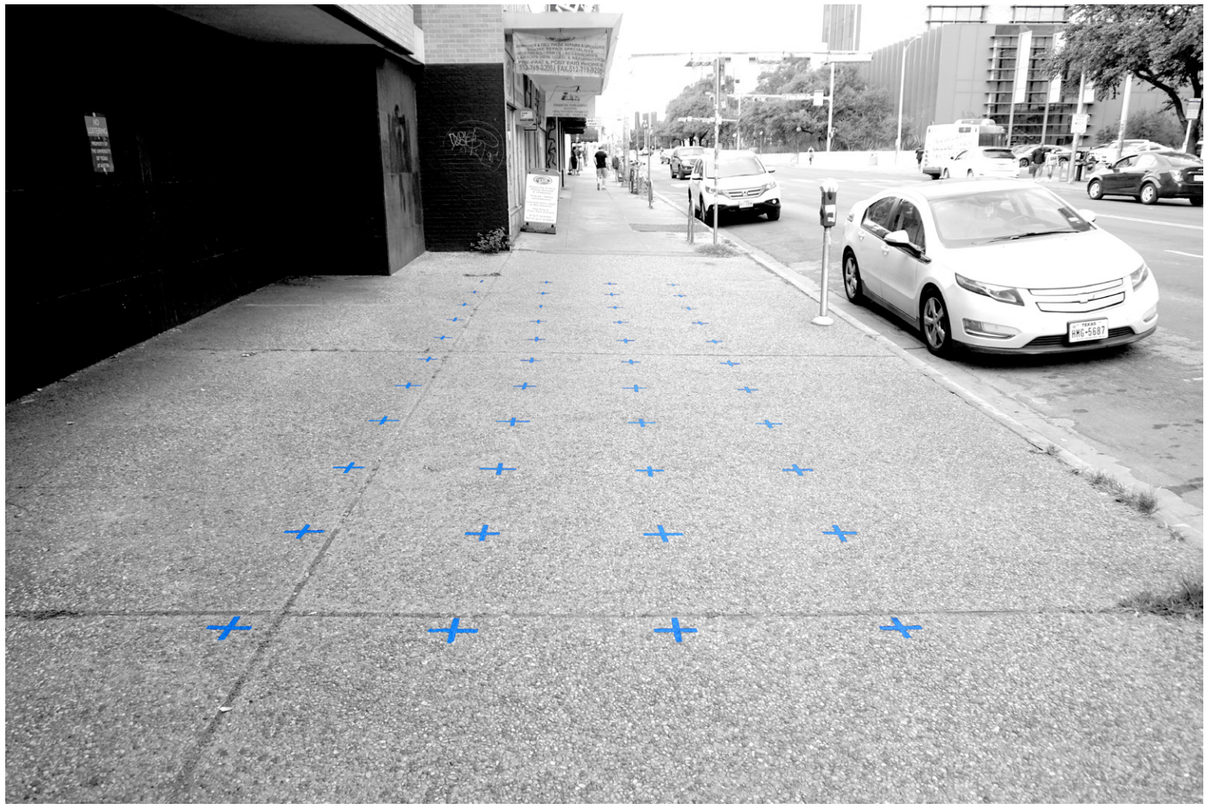
St. Austin’s Catholic Church with a sidewalk design derived from a photographic image of the actual sidewalk. The texture, as it exists in the image, is topographically exaggerated to produce a new field condition.



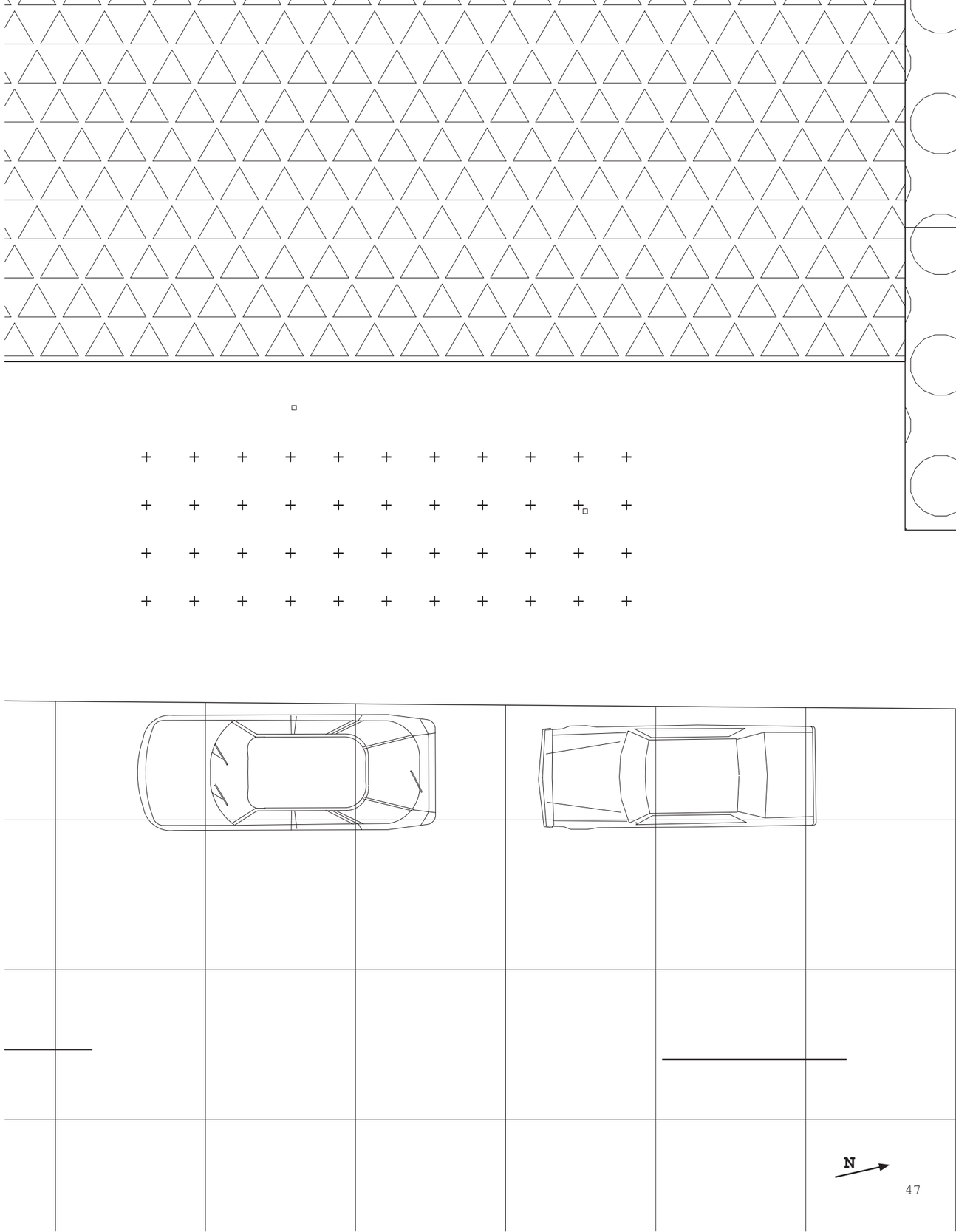
Street Marks | Street Rooms

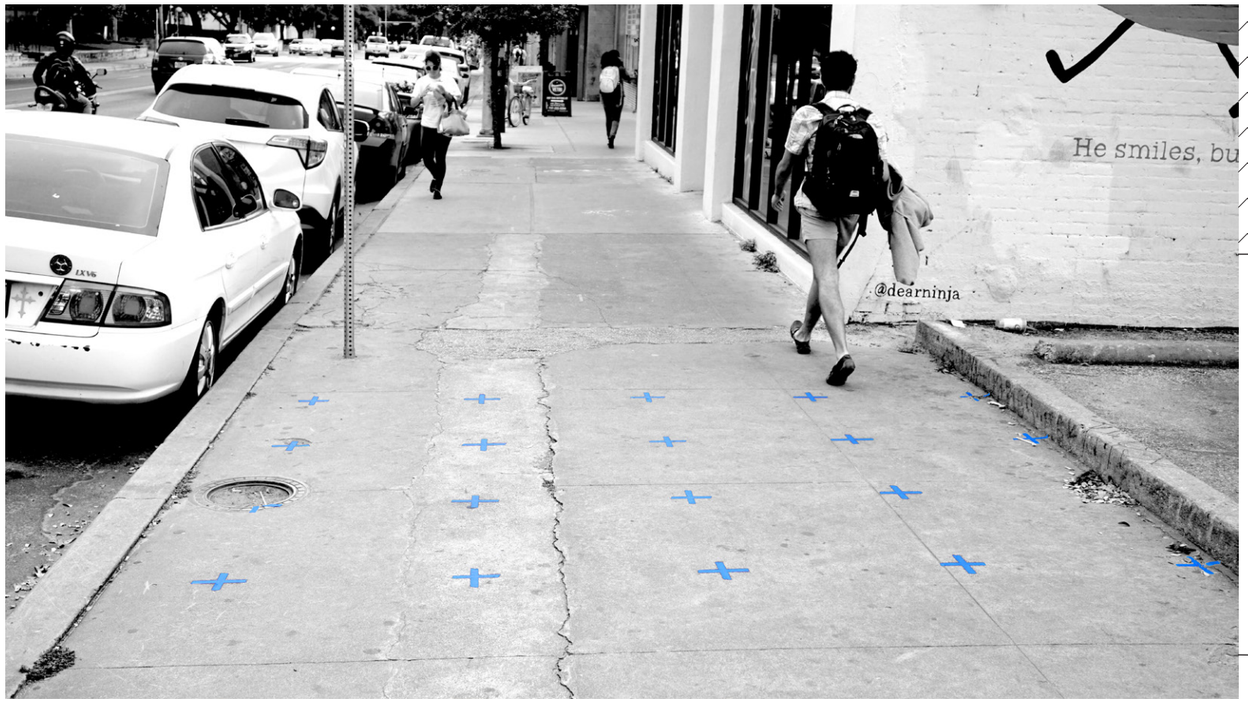
When a drawing is full-scale, in a public place, it is not exactly a drawing anymore. What follows are a series of experiments that test how drawing (the architect's primary mode of operation) can transform a space directly.

These are small utopias "not-places" that subtly and briefly transform, transport,and transition the passer-by.



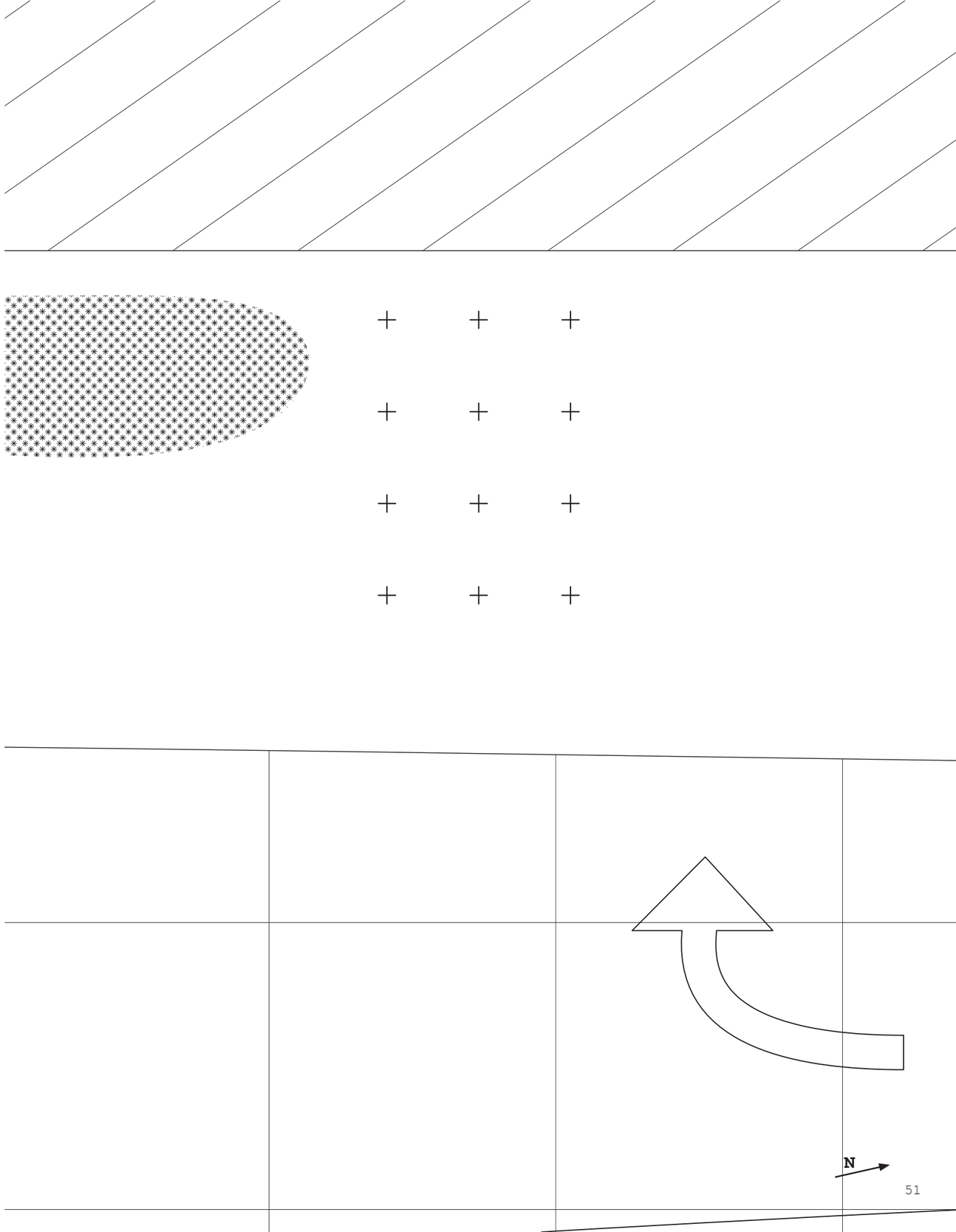
The first set of marks I made were a series of different sized grids, done in blue tape.

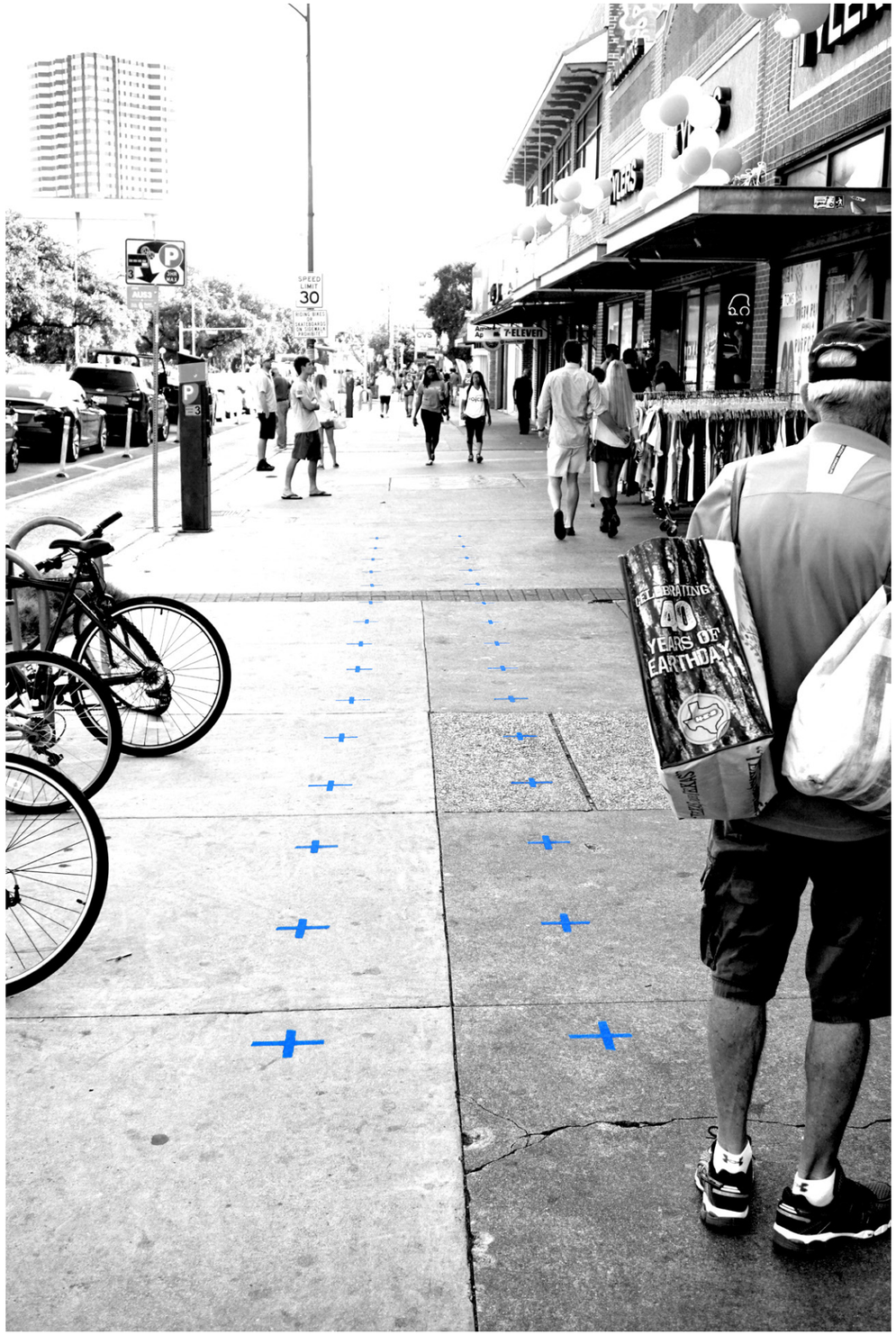


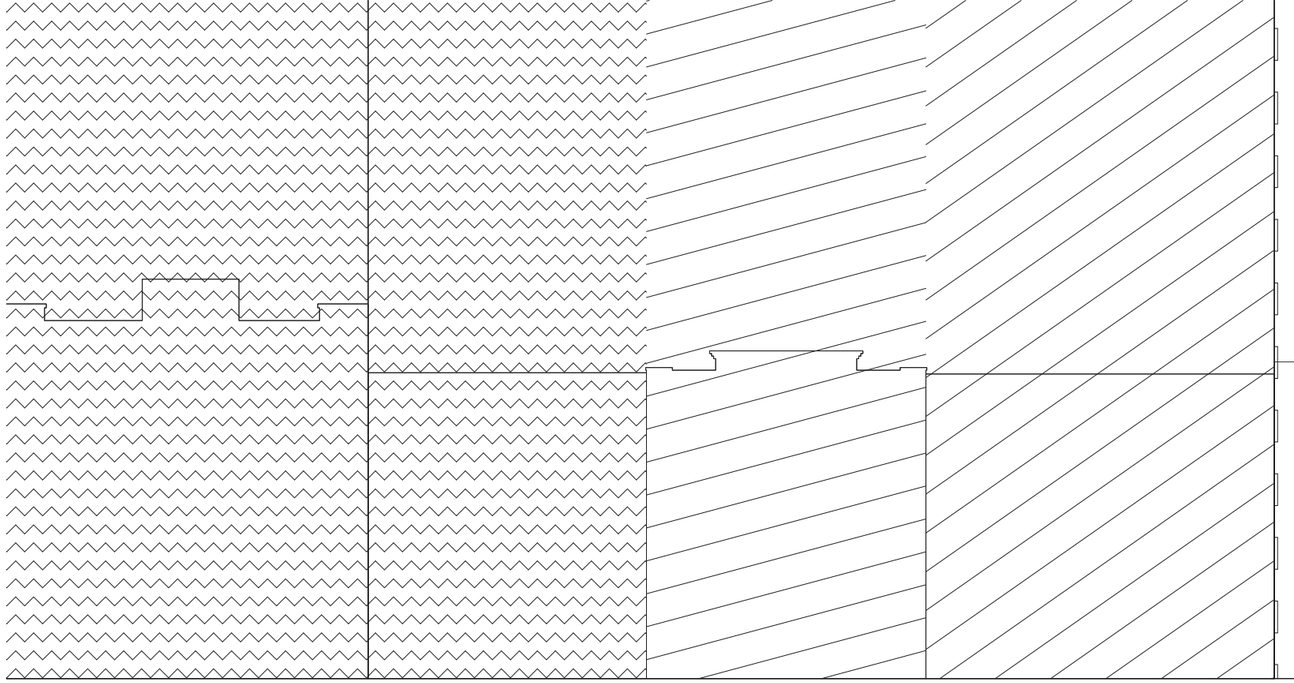


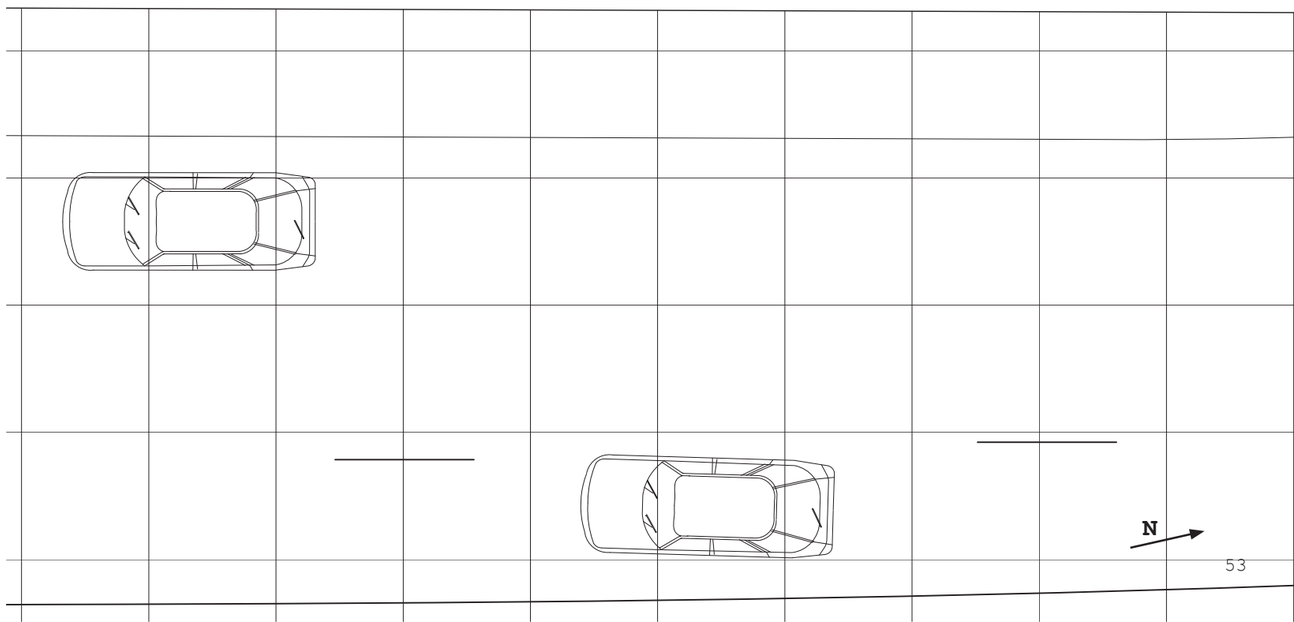
The grid cells are 32” by 32” (roughly telephone-booth sized.)


2402B
no smoking please
no smoking please


N


SPEED LIMIT 30
7-ELEVEN
CELEBRATING
40
YEARS OF
EARTHDAY

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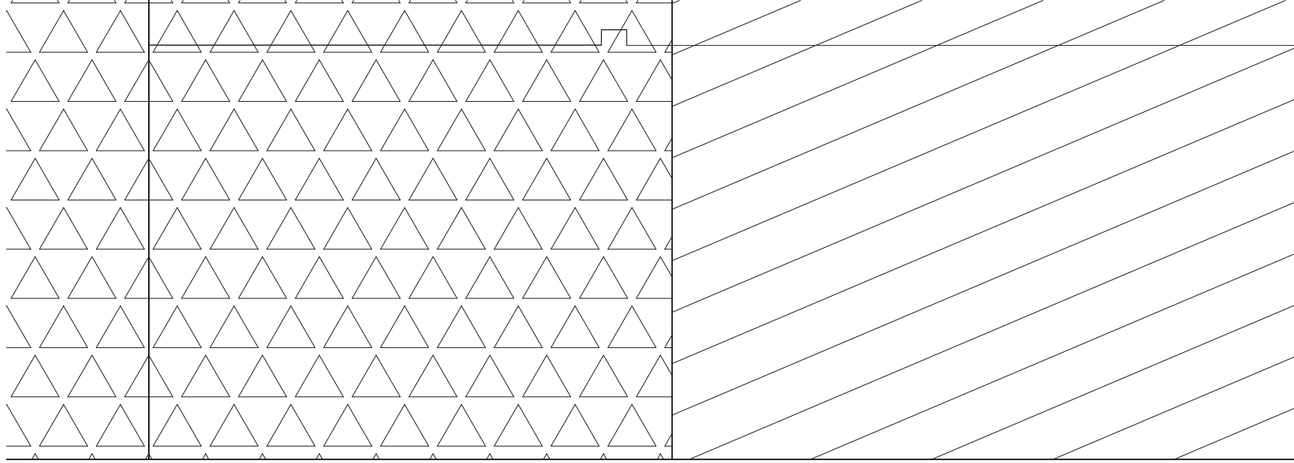
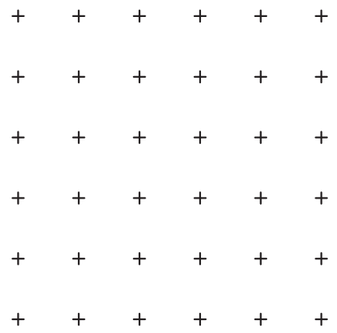
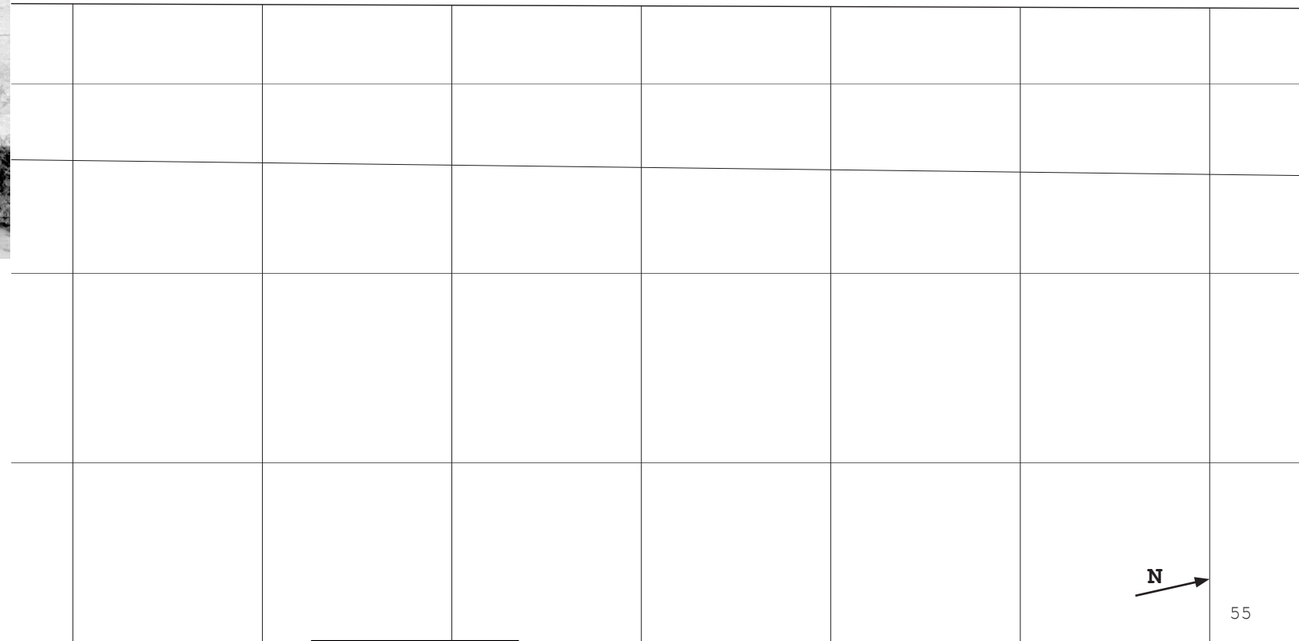
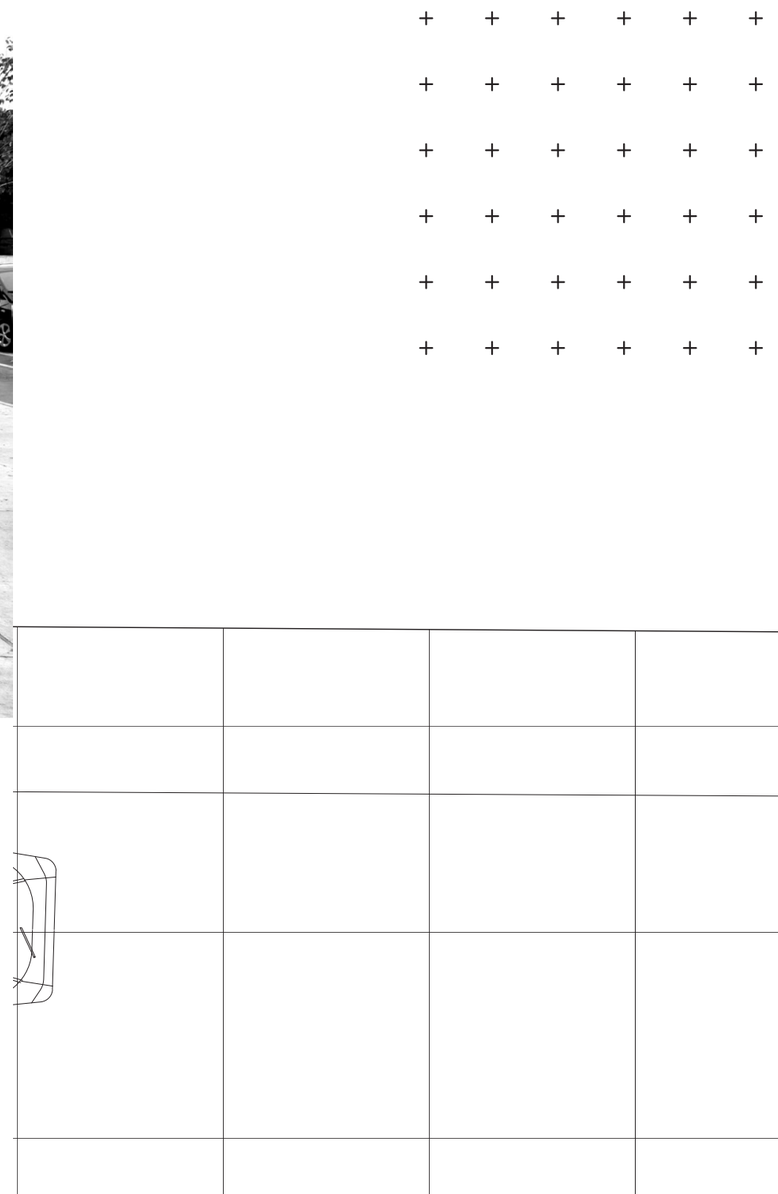
The sizing and siting of the grids was dictated by opportunity and feeling, more than anything else.



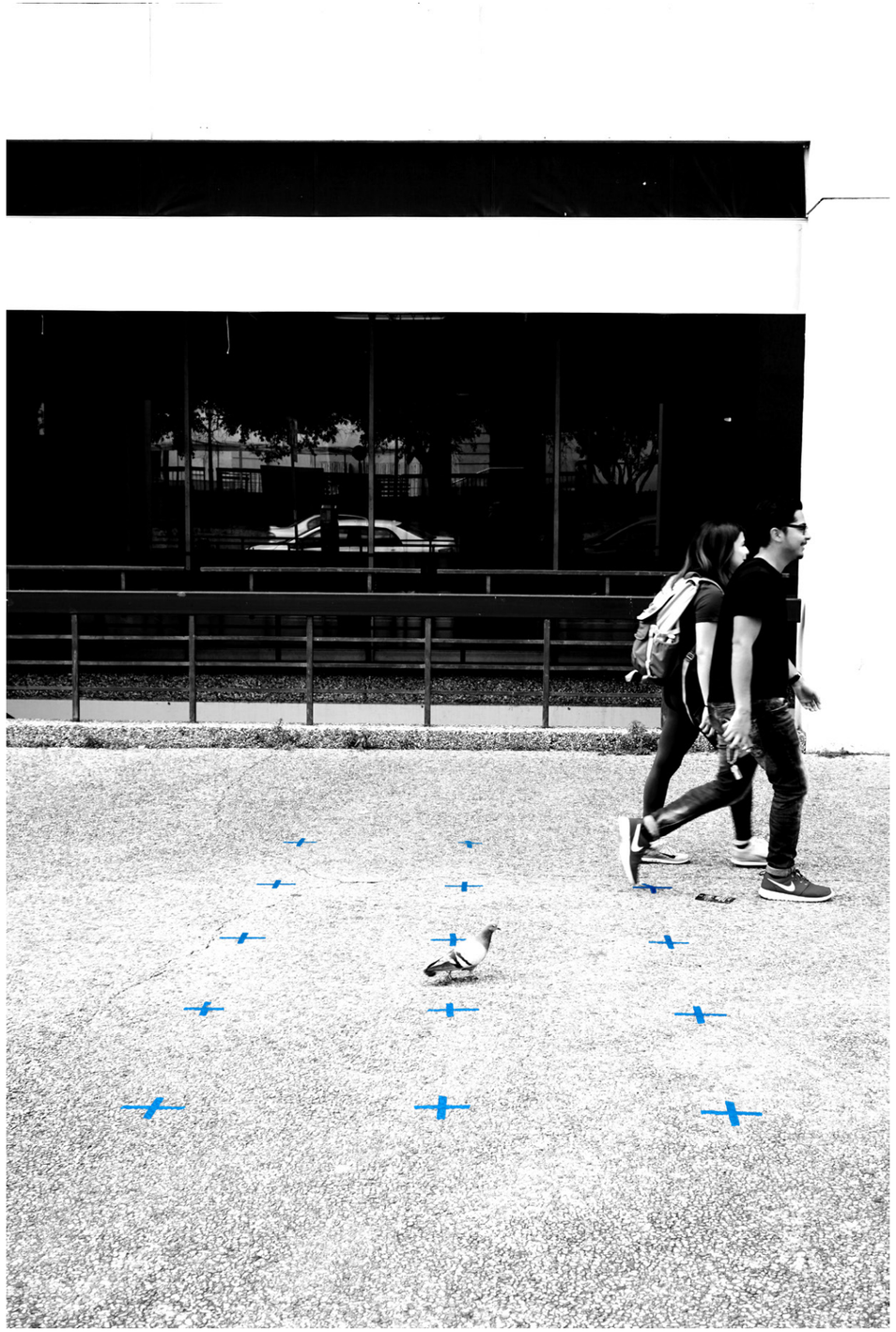




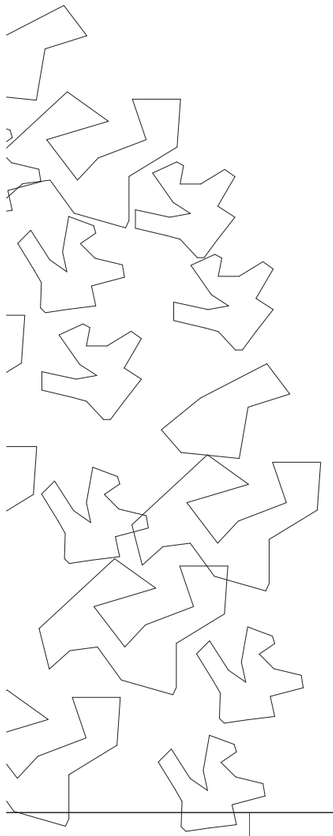
Unlike typical architectural drawings, the marks do not refer to a geometry outside themselves. They are just experienced as marks delineating space.

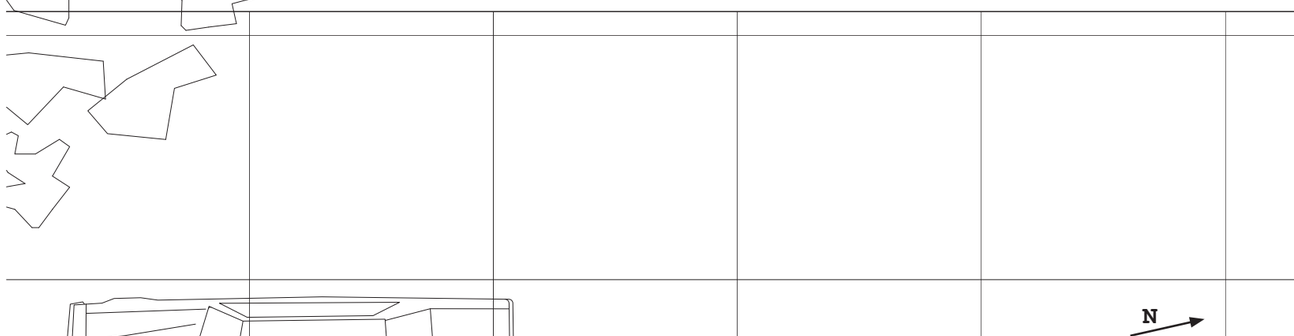



NTC LIVE
10.19 6PM
CLARK BASKETBALL COURT




UNIVERSITY
BAPTIST CHURCH
Services
Sunday School 9:30
Worship 11:00




N

A cloud of red chalk marks what once had been a gathering place outside the old Varsity Theater.

Other clouds were sited outside prior places of gathering, including the Night Hawk diner, the Texas Theater, and Captain Quackenbush's Espresso


COCO'S CAFE
BLIZY
P


urgentcare

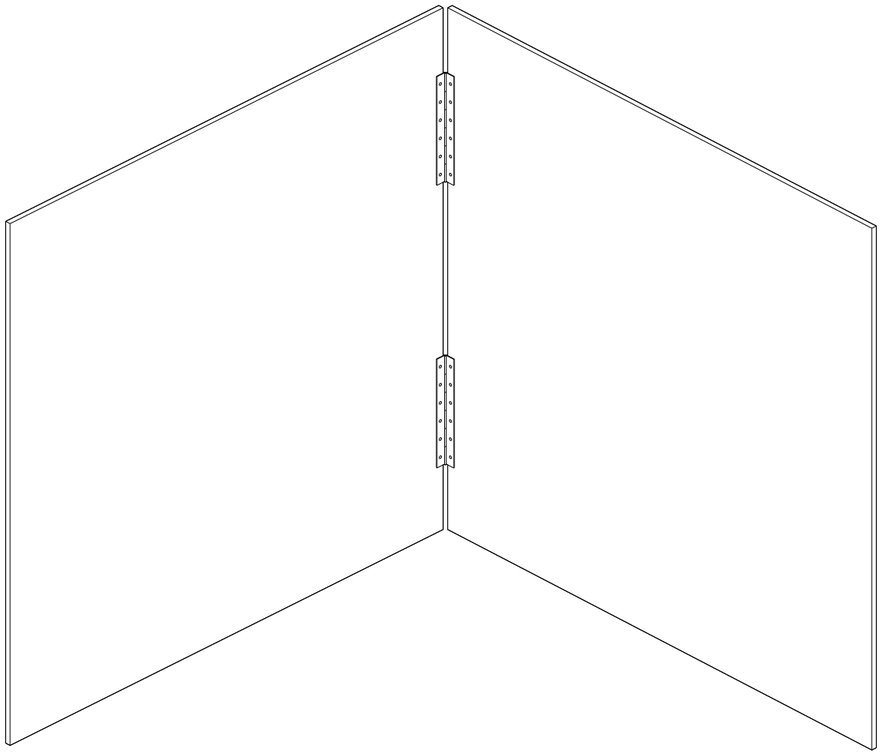
A horizon line of green tape was removed almost immediately. By who? I did not see.

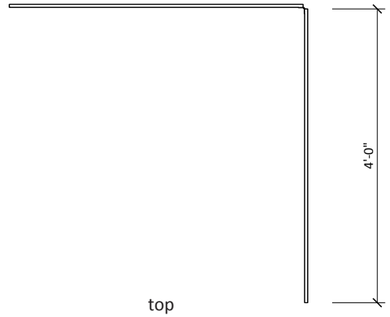
A series of blue lines were transgressed.

A strangely intentional spattering of pixels.
A swarm of varying densities as it flows up and down the street.

Corners

1/4” = 1’

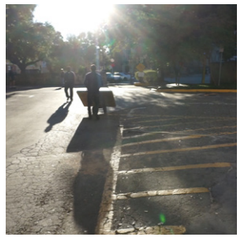


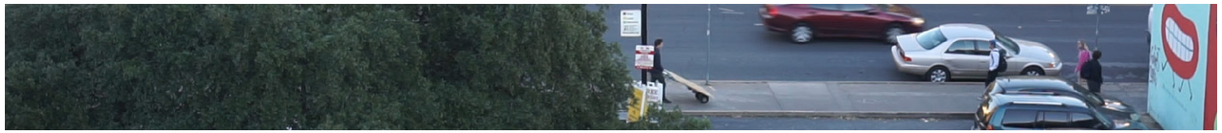


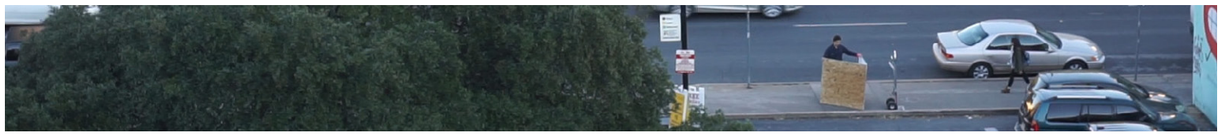
top

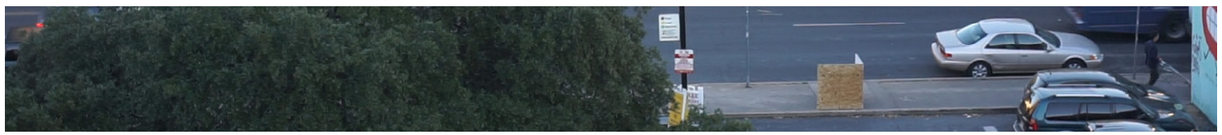
right

front







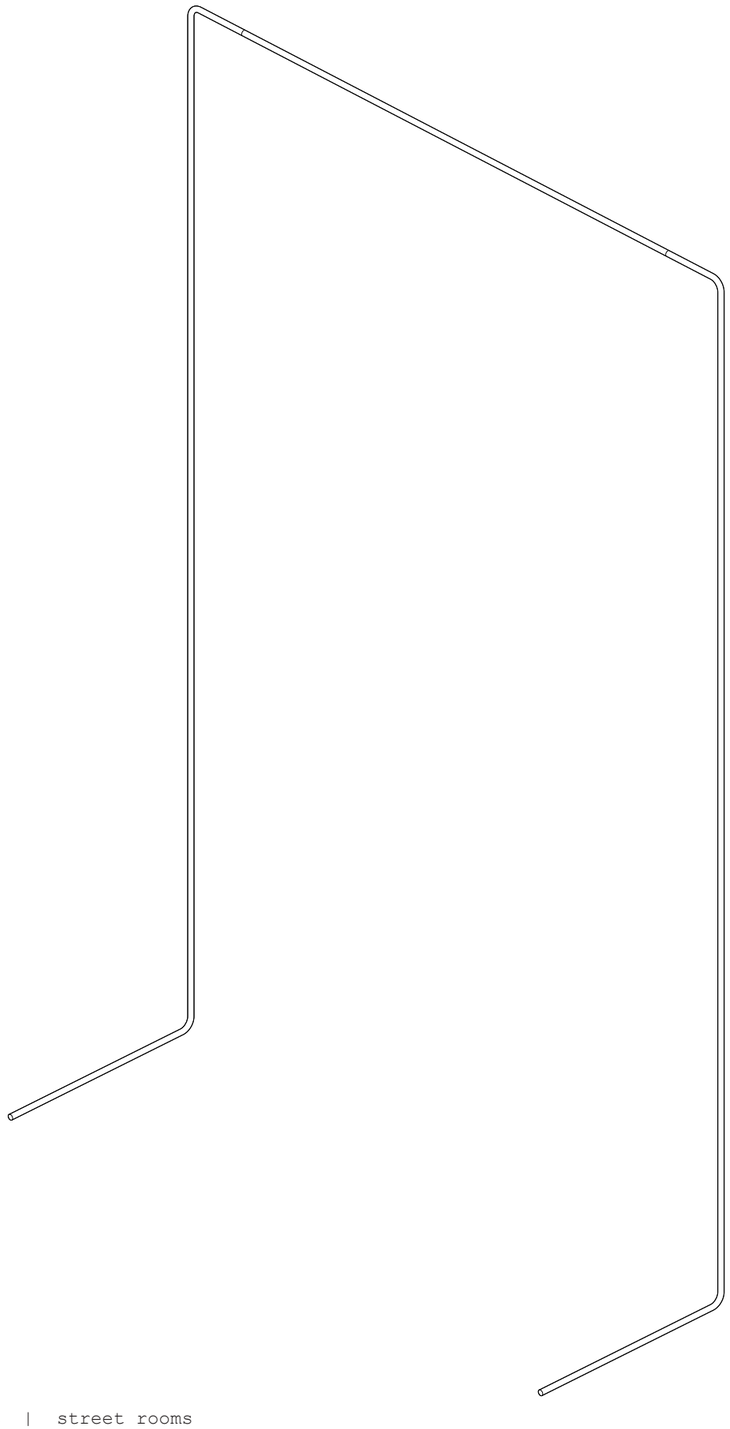


The two corners are made of half-inch OSB boards, hinged together. The inner faces are painted white and the exterior ones are left bare to suggest that you are entering a new space, a public ‘street room’. Being a pair of corners they mark opposite ends of an invisible quadrilateral.

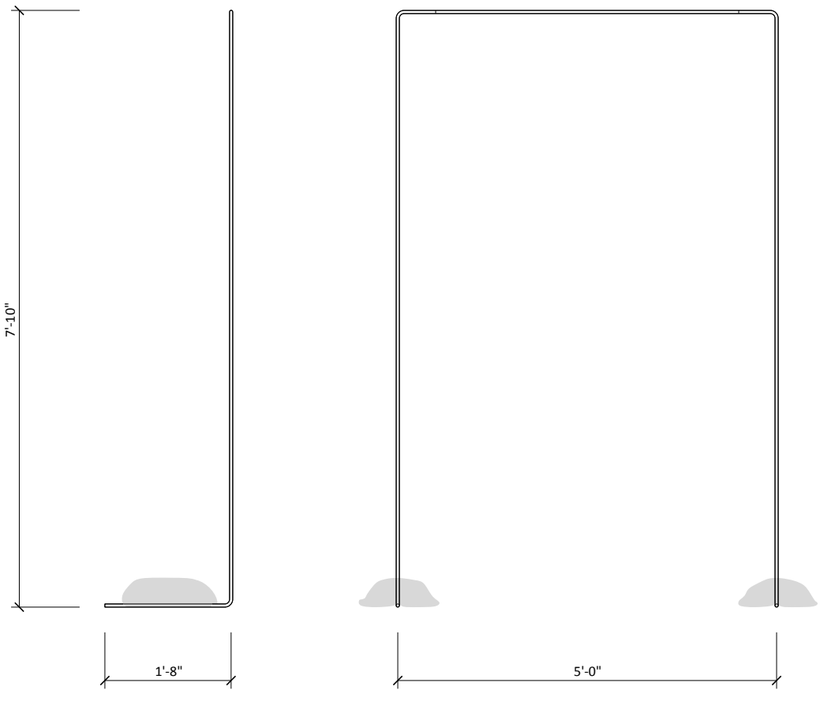
The notion of a “street room” is briefly mentioned in Situationist literature on the city, as part of a gripe Guy Debord and Ivan Chtcheglov had with the emerging interest in adaptable megastructures at the time. Megastructuralists wanted to put streets inside their structures; the Situationists were not optimistic this would change the banality they saw in the world. Here is a street room whose boundaries are incomplete. They must be mentally completed by the pedestrian.

Gates

1/4” = 1’



top



right

front

The second street room was made with two rebar gates. Nothing more than a line marking a threshold. Like two goal posts, when placed facing each other, they command a space of their own. Despite their lightness and near-invisibility in the visual chaos of the Drag, the gates eventually confront pedestrians, forcing them into a strange choice: to pass through or not.


PRIMOS

Towards an Urban Nakedness

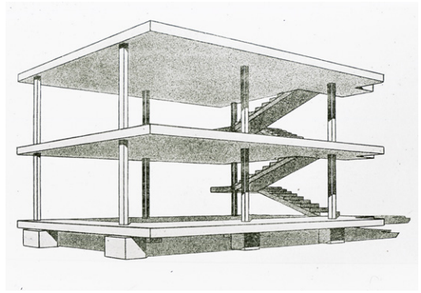
Diogenes the Cynic (412-323 BC) was perhaps the first performance artist. He demonstrated his philosophy by living it out on the streets. In true utopian fashion, he had no allegiance to any one place, coining the word ‘cosmopolitan’ (citizen of the world).

Towards an Urban Nakedness

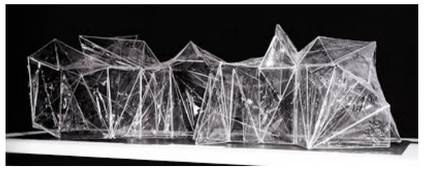
Cannibalism, Play, and the Dream of Urban Liberation

Modernism had many dreams associated with it, or so I have heard. Over the course of the 20th century—due to varying social and political contexts across the continents, the availability of real commissions (or lack thereof), or the degree of radicalness of the minds at work—there have been a plethora of architectural responses to how buildings and cities should reflect modern life. Before it became codified, in large part due to the curation of the International Style exhibition contrived by Hitchcock and Johnson in 1932, architects where still actively pioneering in search what modern architecture was: re-thinking norms rather than reproducing them. What was so concisely diagramed as the architecture of freedom in Le Corbusier's *maison dom-ino* would ultimately aid its potential for mass homogeneity and oppressiveness. The dissolution of this new codification and the looming realization of canonized Modernism as the "architecture of anonymous corporate domination," as Reyner Banham put it[1], became the very target of the more utopian architects of the after-modern period.

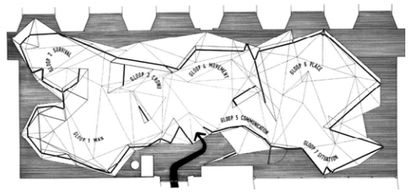
Banham's English contemporaries are among the most championed of these aforementioned utopians. The projects of Cedric Price and Archigram were searching for architectures and urbanisms that facilitated freedom and would liberate human activity. As much as Archigram revered the work of the pioneer modernists, they disagreed on a fundamental tenet that a building should be 'conclusive' and 'resolved'. According to the group, what building should really do is create 'open ends'.[2] Across their projects, the inventiveness lies in designing buildings, machines, and environments that are endlessly customizable by the inhabitant. In 1963, the six core members of the group first convened, under invitation from the Institute for Contemporary Arts (ICA) in London, to design an exhibition on the contemporary city. "If 1964 would see Archigram emerge as hugely confident—with Plug-In City, Walking City, Computer City,



"Maison Dom-ino"
Le Corbusier
1914-1915



Model of interior envelope of the 'Living City' exhibition
Archigram
1963



Plan of 'Living City' exhibition
Archigram
1963

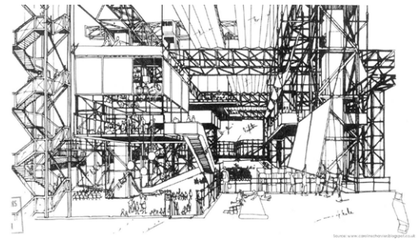
Underwater City, and so on—a year earlier their ideas appeared more hesitant, formative, and poetic."[3] The exhibition installation, 'Living City', was a completely immersive interior: an irregular polyhedral frame clad in images, words, collages, even games that recreate moments of urban chaos for the visitor. The first section of the exhibition, or "gloops" as Archigram called them, was centered on the figure of the 'Man' (unfortunately perpetuating a patriarchal understand of the city). Here the visitor was invited, by a short poem, to play a game that would sort them into one of three archetypical characters, through which the visitor would experience the ensuing gloops. This perspectival emphasis on a subject is less typical of the modernists, who instead were fully invested in collectivity. 'Man' enters the CIAM discourse in July 1951 with Sigfried Gideon later concluding that the true subject of architecture was the individual, "bare and naked".[4] He was referencing the shift in thinking on the city, reorienting itself towards considering the physical and psychological needs of the individual.

The seventh and final gloop of the Living City exhibit was called 'Situation'. This was no coincidence, as Simon Sadler makes clear. Peter Cook and Michael Webb, two Archigram protagonists, along with their colleague Cedric Price, had attended a lecture by the situationist

Constant earlier in 1963.[5] Besides the lecture, the term *situation* arrived in English cultural discourse a few years earlier, with Reyner Banham's 1959 article, "The City as a Scrambled Egg" where he analyzes the *Psychogeographic Guide to Paris*, 1956, by Guy Debord and Asger Jorn. Archigram reprinted a portion of this famous situationist collage-map on the wall of the 'Situation' gloop to demonstrate the psycho-drifting technique the Parisian group had been experimenting with. Sadler points out that the two groups use the term *situation* differently. While the Situationists anticipate the possibility of revolutionary action in situations, Archigram sees them more whimsically, as moments or events that evoke excitement or a change in social atmosphere.

Guy Debord labels subsequent collage-map "The Naked City" in 1957. His use of the word *naked* is closely linked to his theories on *spectacle*. Nakedness from spectacle is authentic life. The Situationists were far less techno-optimistic than Archigram. They saw things such as pop advertisements, electronic billboards, and new communication technologies as barriers to the freedom of the urban individual. "For situationists, such phenomenon were little more than the untrustworthy glamorization of state and corporate power, unrelated to the requirements of ordinary people and their ore fully lived lives."[6] *Nakedness* for Debord, was a connection to the *real*.

Almost thirty years before Debord's "Naked City", and over five thousand miles away, a Brazilian artist-architect was delivering a speech to a congress of modern architects and urbanists, using this very same adjective. "The City of the Naked Man" was a lecture delivered at the 4th Pan-American Congress of Architecture and Urbanism in 1930. Flavio de Carvalho, at this point already gaining notoriety in São Paulo as a public figure, would remain at the margins of Brazil's architectural heritage. His alliances were not so much with the architects that would come to canonize 'Brazilian Modernism' as we know it, such as Rino Levi, Lucio Costa, Affonso Reidy, or Oscar Niemeyer. Instead, Carvalho was aligned with the *anthropofagia* vanguard ("anthropophagy" being the scientific term for "cannibalism"). The 'cannibals' organized themselves in the 1920s and included writers, painters, and poets. The choice of label was elaborated by Oscar de Andrade, who explains how the modern Brazilian is an appropriator of cultures; like the Tupi indians she consumes *otherness*, and from it, strengthens herself. So when Flavio de Carvalho attends the Pan-American Congress, he does so as a 'modernist' but rather as a delegate 'cannibal'.



"Fun Palace"
Cedric Price
1917

"The Naked City"
Guy Dedord
1957

The "Cannibal Manifest"
Oswald de Andrade, featuring a graphic by Tarsila de Amaral
1927

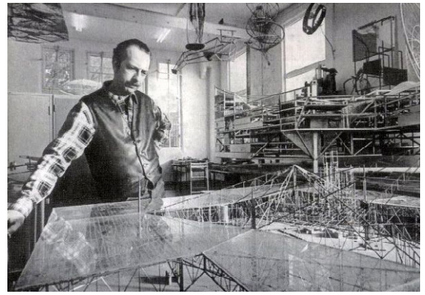
As the title suggests, the 'City of the Naked Man' grows out of its idealized dweller. The Naked Man (again, a patriarchal usage of "Man") is naked in that he is free from the entire classical Western-European ontology which Brazil inherited as a colonial entity, and which, Flavio de Carvalho argues, no longer serves towards furthering the creative progress of humanity. He says, "the free man, terminated from expired taboos, shall produce marvelous things, his liberated intelligence will create new ideas."[7] His city is to have no institution of marriage, no private property, and no god. He then goes on to describe the actual spatial layout of the city, which is organized in concentric zones according to different categories of needs and desires. That Carvalho organizes the city in this way betrays a strange hybridization of ideas, both constrained and free, at once ludic and panoptic. Finally, he concludes his speech by inviting the Pan-American representatives to, in his words, "remove their civilized-person masks, and to demonstrate their anthropophagic tendencies, which were repressed by colonial conquest but which today will be our pride, as sincere men, walking godless towards a logical solution to the problem of life in the city, to the problem of the efficiency of life."[8]

Radical, though in a definitively post-colonial light, Flavio's urban scheme sits between

the Situationist conception, and the Archigram one, of a 'naked' city, that is, a city that facilitates the liberation of its dwellers. In de Carvalho's case, the dweller is the *anthropofago* (the cannibal) who might define liberation as the ability not only to move freely or to associate with anyone, but also, to think and create freely. Constant had a similar ideal subject with which he populated his own unbuilt urban utopia, 'New Babylon'. He describes his city in an essay entitled, "Another City for Another Life", that he wrote for the third issue of the Situationist magazine *Internationale Situationniste*. In it he describes 'New Babylon' and its dweller, the *homo ludens* ("man the player" or "man who plays"). The premise for New Babylon rests on an optimistic Marxist notion where the near future is witness to a complete automatization of production which consequently obsoletes human labor. The *homo sapien* or *homo faber* becomes the *homo ludens* in answering the question of how this newly freed subject will use her "unbound forces."[9] 'New Babylon'—an endlessly rearrangeable playground of situations—rests on Constant's optimistic assumption that everyone has the potential to create, and that if only the social and physical order of the world were configured appropriately, we could be indulging ourselves in collective and creative play. Even without the anti-European sentiments found in Flavio's 'City of the Naked Man', the dreams of New Babylon are quite congruent with Flavio de Carvalho's vision.

Each utopianist-artist-architect-urbanist describes their unbuilt city in a lecture format. Constant, however, spoke substantially few words when compared to what he produced in terms of drawings, images, and models. Flavio, a notorious polymath who produced countless paintings, drawings, architectural proposals, public performances, theatrical productions, and two built works (a housing complex and his personal residence), someone who, on the whole, seems equally prolific in his creative production, deliberately leaves the 'City of the Naked Man' without any supporting graphics. It is almost as if the slightest mark of the pencil would immediately make an unwelcome boundary, more limiting than emancipative. His only proof of concept was the way he lived his life.

Flavio took to the streets. Like Debord and other Situationist personnel would later do, Flavio carried out experiments in public. He sought to provoke situations (in both the Archigram and Situationist senses) that would stir social controversy. The first of his two most famous public experiments included walking against the crowd in a *corpus cristi*



Constant standing before some of his models for 'New Babylon'

Cover of 'Experiencia no.2' in which Flavio de Carvalho recounts his experience with the angry mob

procession, refusing to remove his hat when asked, causing the procession to transform into an angry mod, purportedly calling for Flavio's lynching.[10] The second experiment has left more of a mark on Brazil's cultural history, when Flavio designed a "New Look" for a man of the tropics. The outfit included a skirt and fishnet tights (for 'ventilation'). Flavio marched from home to his workplace, through the avenues of São Paulo sporting his look for the public.

According to Constant, "the artist has always tried to represent the image of the world, but more important is to change the world itself and make it more livable."[11] Flavio de Carvalho, however, did not see *representation* and *action* as separate realms. Actions can represent ideas. Only more recently have some artists categorically shifted their mission away from producing representative objects and instead producing situations directly. Nicolas Bourriaud, in endeavoring to give shape to this category of 90s art, terms it 'Relational Aesthetics'. This is art that does not produce art works in the traditional, marketable, sense, but instead creates temporary, participative, social relations as a form of art. In his book he organizes these emerging practices along the well-worn historiographic line of avant gardes, linking Dadaism, Situationism, and now his Relational Aesthetics. The difference, he posits, is precisely what Flavio de

Carvalho was doing, that is, living rather than merely representing. According to Bourriaud, "the role of artworks is no longer to form imaginary and utopian realities, but to actually be ways of living and models of action within the existing real, whatever the scale chosen by the artist."[12] Claire Bishop, involved in a similar task as Bourriaud, prefers to call these works simply 'participatory art'. She places a bit of distance between her historical project and Bouriaud's in that she is interested in works that are more political in nature; however, she also relies on our favorite word to characterize the works: "the artist is conceived less as an individual producer of discrete objects than as a collaborator and producer of *situations*" (her italics).[13]

Can the goals of the 1960s (or even the 1910s) be achieved on the streets today? Are we still searching for, as Sadler puts it, "an architecture of intimacy that would pare away the barriers between one's mind, body, other bodies and the environment"?[14] Paring away the barriers, removing layers, shedding unnecessary rituals: how does nakedness still stand as a guiding metaphor for achieving free life in cities? The same way Adolf Loos, a pioneering utopian in his own right, believed that every man should be their own interior designer[15], I would advocated that nakedness requires a reassumed agency on the part of every city dweller. The best architects can do is to encourage it, along with the artists, and any other vocations whose scope might be broadened to take on such a task. And they can do so, not by representing utopia, but through utopian action. Just as both Archigram and Constant dreamt, cities should be shaped in ways that allow for a freedom of situations to take place, but if they aren't, maybe those situations should just happen anyway. In 2016, as these words are written, urban reality remains segregated, limited, and coded; corporate advertisements increasingly permeate the privacy of our 'attentional commons' (to borrow a term from the contemporary philosopher Matthew Crawford);[16] automobiles limit our movements rather than expand them. Nakedness is remains far away. Perhaps we need another 1910s or 1960s, another burst of productive dreaming to nudge things a little bit. The architect, working between social ideas and material realities, might be the one to do it.

Flavio de Carvalho, wearing his 'New Look' on the streets of São Paulo, 1956

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